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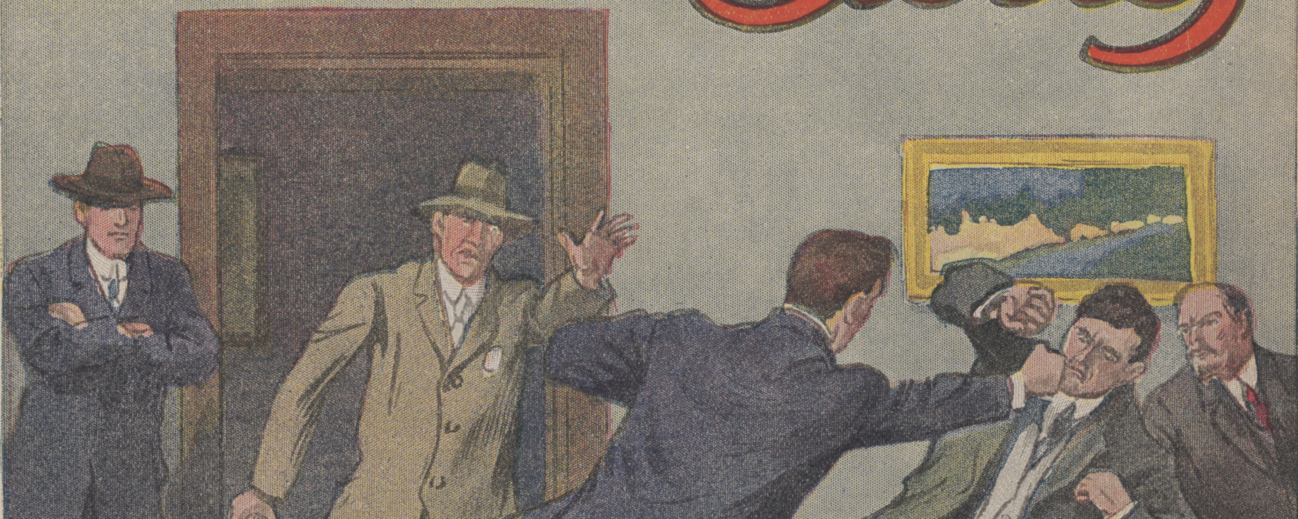
# Nick Carter Stories



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## THE EVIL FORMULA

## or Nick Carter's Gas Meter Problem

# NICK CARTER STORIES

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# THE EVIL FORMULA;

## Or, NICK CARTER'S GAS METER PROBLEM.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

### CHAPTER I.

### SUICIDE—OR WHAT?

"No, no, Mr. Carter, never! He did not do it, could not have done it. I never will believe, never can believe, that Doctor Deacon committed suicide."

"You speak so positively that——"

"I am positive of it, Mr. Carter, absolutely so."

"But why do you feel so sure of it, contrary to the opinions of a capable physician and the local sheriff? In a fatality of this kind, Miss Deacon, it is necessary to have something more than mere belief as a basis for final judgment. What reasons have you for feeling so positive that——"

"I am Doctor Deacon's niece, his nearest relative, his only near relative, in fact, and I have lived with him since childhood. I know his nature, his temperament, his lofty character, Mr. Carter, and that it was absolutely unlike him to have taken his own life. No, no, I never can believe it! You may go out there and investigate for yourself. Doctor Gray and Sheriff Bragg are still out there, and, no doubt, will insist that they are right, and that I am wrong. Nevertheless——"

"There is no great haste," Nick Carter dryly interposed. "I will soon find out what they really know about the case. What they merely think about it is not material."

In company with his chief assistant, Chickering Carter, Nick had arrived upon the scene less than an hour after the fatality was discovered.

That was due entirely to the prompt action of the beautiful girl so forcibly addressing him, Claudia Deacon, the niece of the dead man. She was a tall and graceful blonde, scarce nineteen, with a pink-and-white complexion, expressive blue eyes, and an abundance of wavy, glistening brown hair.

She had received the two detectives in the library of a handsome residence which was situated in a village a half hour's run from New York; and Nick's powerful touring car was now standing at the curbing in charge of his chauffeur, Danny Maloney.

It was the home of Doctor David Deacon, the celebrated cancer specialist, and the head of the Deacon Drug Company. He was a man whose study of the dread affliction and whose alleged discovery of a medicinal remedy not only had rendered him famous, but had also opened a vast market for the remedy, made from his secret formula and under his personal supervision, and distributed by the commercial corporation of which he was the founder and chief director—the Deacon Drug Company.

Now, however, the laudable career of Doctor David Deacon had come to an end. The famous physician and specialist had been found dead at eight o'clock that October morning.

Not in his bed.

Not even in his house, nor in the attractive grounds surrounding it—an estate of nearly an acre, also containing the two buildings required for his professional work and the commercial part of his business. Both were artistic structures from an architectural standpoint, and so embellished with beautifully laid-out grounds that they did not detract from the beautiful residential section upon which they had in a way encroached.

Doctor Deacon was found dead in an annex of his laboratory building, thirty yards back of his house. The laboratory fronted on the next street, as did the more imposing edifice in which his famous remedy was made and prepared for shipment.

Doctor Deacon was found dead in an armchair.

The room was filled with illuminating gas from a heater, in the form of artificial logs in a small fireplace.

The noted specialist, then a bachelor above seventy, had been last seen alive at five o'clock the previous afternoon.

Gazing at his handsome niece, by whom he had been hurriedly summoned by telephone, Nick Carter added more gravely:

"I appreciate your feelings, Miss Deacon, of course, and I admit that you are the best judge of this matter from the standpoint taken. Tell me the circumstances briefly, however, as far as known, and I will then try to ferret out the truth."

"The truth—that is what I want, Mr. Carter," replied Claudia. "That, sir, is all I want."

She spoke with a fervency that led Nick to suspect that she feared the truth would be seriously perverted. Without making any comment, however, he repeated:

"Tell me the known circumstances."

"To begin with, Mr. Carter, our family has for years consisted of only my uncle and myself," said Claudia. "We have only one general servant, a housekeeper, a widow named Margaret Grant. She was away yesterday afternoon and evening. I was also absent from four o'clock until ten. Doctor Deacon was alone in his laboratory annex at five o'clock, where he spends most of his time. His confidential secretary left him there at that house, and came here to write two letters that the doctor had just dictated."

"Came here?" queried Nick. "Is that customary?"

"Yes," said Claudia, pointing to a desk and telephone in one corner. "Much of the doctor's correspondence is of a strictly private nature, and Frank always has attended to it here."

Nick noticed the familiarity with which she spoke of the physician's secretary. He made merely a mental note of it, and inquired:

"What is his full name, Miss Deacon?"

"Frank Thornton."

"Proceed."

"I had told my uncle that both Margaret and I would be away, and he had said he would get what lunch he might want before retiring," Claudia continued. "It was a little after ten when I came home from visiting a friend. I saw as I was entering the side gate that there was no light in the annex, and also that Margaret was just putting out the light in her bedroom, which told me that she was at home and about to retire. There was a dim light in the side hall, however, and I inferred that Doctor Deacon had gone to bed, which he nearly always does about nine o'clock."

"It then, you say, was after ten?"

"Yes."

"Continue."

"I did not hear him stirring in his room while I was dressing for breakfast this morning, Mr. Carter, so I went to his door to call him," Claudia went on. "I then saw with dismay that he was absent, and that his bed had not been occupied. Greatly alarmed, for he has been in failing health for some months, I ran down to the kitchen and questioned Margaret, and I then heard cries from outside."

"The fatality had just been discovered?" Nick remarked.

"Yes."

"By whom?"

"By Mr. Richard Chester. He is the superintendent in the manufactory," said Claudia, pointing to the larger of the two buildings to be seen through the library window.

"How did he happen to discover it?" Nick inquired.

"He opens the building each morning at eight o'clock, and has charge of the score of men and girls employed there," Miss Deacon explained. "He boards in a house across the side street, and he nearly always enters our side gate and passes back of the laboratory to go to the other building. That takes him directly by the laboratory annex, which Doctor Deacon used for a strictly private office."

"I understand," said Nick, glancing out at the building.

"The annex was added for that purpose," said Claudia. "While passing it this morning, Mr. Chester thought he detected escaping gas, and he tried the door and found it unlocked. He entered and found Doctor Deacon dead in his chair."

"It was then that you heard his cries?"

"Yes. I ran to the kitchen window and saw him rushing out of the annex. He could not remain, owing to the terrible quantity of gas. He saw that it came from the heater, however, and he managed to turn it off, afterward opening a window from outside, and——"

"Omitting unimportant details, Miss Deacon, tell me what has been done?" said Nick, interrupting. "A physician was called?"

"Yes, immediately," said Claudia. "Doctor Gray lives in the next street, and he came in about ten minutes. He said it looked like a case of suicide, Mr. Carter, and notified the coroner and our county sheriff, Alton Bragg. The coroner has not arrived yet, but the sheriff thinks——"

"I will presently find out what he thinks and why," Nick again remarked. "Before doing so, Miss Deacon, there is one question I want you to answer. It may, of course, lead to others."

"What question, Mr. Carter?"

"Why, in spite of the opinion of Doctor Gray and the sheriff, did you so quickly feel that my services would be required?" Nick pointedly questioned. "The need of a detective denotes a suspicion, or at least an apprehension, of crime."

A faint tinge of red appeared in Claudia's pale cheeks. Her brows knit perceptibly, but she replied promptly, and with a noticeable firmness:

"I have said that I do not believe that Doctor Deacon committed suicide," she replied. "If not, Mr. Carter, his death must be the result of an accident, or a crime."

"True."

"I want to know the truth. I had one other reason, Mr. Carter, for sending for you. In his death struggle, or so it is supposed, Doctor Deacon fell violently against the arm of his chair. His watch was broken. It stopped precisely at a quarter past five."

"That appears to fix very nearly the exact time of his death," said Nick.

"I agree with you," bowed Claudia, gazing steadily at him. "That, Mr. Carter, was only fifteen minutes after Frank Thornton left him," she pointed out.

"H'm, just so! She has sent for me lest Thornton may be suspected of murder," flashed through Nick's mind.

The same deduction had leaped up in the mind of Chick Carter, also, who had been mutely listening to the foregoing intercourse.

"Is Thornton the last known to have seen Doctor Deacon alive?" Nick inquired, without a change of countenance.

"Yes," said Claudia.

"Who was in the laboratory?"

"Only one person is employed in the laboratory. She is an entry clerk, and has the care and keeping up of the stock of drugs and chemicals used by Doctor Deacon."

"I see."

"Her name is Stella North. She went home yesterday just before five, leaving the laboratory through the front door, and locking it after her, as usual. Frank heard her going out while the doctor was dictating the last of the two letters mentioned."

"The only way for a person to have joined Doctor Deacon, then, was through the door of the annex?" questioned Nick.

"Yes, sir, unless some person was concealed in the laboratory. There is a door between it and the annex."

"I see," Nick again remarked. "Who suggested that possibility to you, Miss Deacon?"

"No one," said Claudia. "I merely thought of it."

"To whom, then, have you mentioned it?"

"Only to you, Mr. Carter."

"Do you suspect anything of the kind?"

"I cannot say that I really suspect it, for I know of no person who could have been there," Claudia admitted.

"Assuming that one was there, and bent upon killing Doctor Deacon by turning on the gas in the heater, how, in your opinion, could he have accomplished it?" asked Nick tentatively. "Surely, even if the gas could have been stealthily turned on, the physician would have smelled it in time to have prevented asphixiation?"

"You overlook something," said Claudia.

"Yes?"

"He may first have been overcome in some way and rendered unconscious," said the girl.

Nick suppressed a smile.

"You have the makings of a capable detective, Miss Deacon," said he. "Have you mentioned your suspicions—for I see plainly that you have suspicions—to any other person?"

"I have not, Mr. Carter," she replied. "I have sent for you to investigate this case."

"Who knows that you have done so?"

"I have not confided in any one, Mr. Carter."

"Ah, very good! Do not do so, then, at present," said Nick. "Remain here, Miss Deacon, while I look into the matter with my assistant. We may do so without our identity being suspected. Come with me, Chick."

## CHAPTER II.

### A HINT FROM NICK CARTER.

Nick Carter bowed and withdrew from the library while speaking, immediately followed by Chick.

The tall, graceful girl with whom he had been talking, upon whose life the shadow of death had so suddenly fallen, leaving her the last of a name rendered illustrious by him who had been as a father to her and now was no more, turned and drew nearer the library window to gaze out over the sunlit grounds. Her face was deathly pale, her eyes tear-filled, and she was sobbing brokenly.

The main hall of the house ran straight through to a rear door. A branch from it led to a side door, from which a gravel walk made out a tree-shaded street, flanking the west side of the extensive estate.

Nick heard the housekeeper in the kitchen. He went that way and stopped at the open door. He beheld a fleshy, motherly looking woman of sixty, performing, in a perfunctory way, her customary duties, while her sad face reflected her grief over the sudden fatality.

"Do not let me disturb you, Mrs. Grant," said Nick, when she started slightly upon seeing him. "I only want to know about what time you came home last evening?"

"It was half past nine, sir," she replied, without hesitation.

"You supposed, of course, that Doctor Deacon had gone to bed?"

"Yes, sir. I did not so much as dream of——"

"Of what had occurred—certainly not," Nick put in. "It is perfectly plain why neither you nor Miss Deacon apprehended anything of the kind. By the way, Mrs. Grant, did you find any light in the house?"

"I did, sir, or I would have known at once that there was something wrong," said she earnestly. "There was a dim light in the side hall. I supposed, of course, that the doctor had left it for me, or for Miss Deacon, if she came in first."

"Who do you now think left it, Mrs. Grant?"

"Why, Mr. Thornton, sir," she replied, with assurance. "He must have left it, sir. No one else could have been in the house."

"Ah, yes, to be sure," Nick remarked. "I forgot that Mr. Thornton was here. That is all, Mrs. Grant, thank you. We'll go out the back way, Chick."

He led the way while speaking, Chick following, then added quietly, after closing the door:

"No one else could have been in the house, eh? Plainly enough, Chick, Miss Deacon fears that Thornton may be suspected of murder."

"So I have inferred," Chick replied quietly. "I don't just see why she fears it, nevertheless, in view of the positive opinions of Doctor Gray and the sheriff. She must have some secret reason."

"She has," said Nick tersely.

"You suspect that she is in love with Thornton?"

"Exactly."

"And that there is something under the surface?"

"Undoubtedly," Nick nodded. "Something that she does not wish to disclose, Chick, unless it becomes absolutely necessary. She hopes we may be able to prevent it. That is why she sent for me. Unless we succeed in doing so—well, her true motives will then appear."

"She is a beautiful girl."

"Very. I hope we may be able to aid her. She is so alone in her bereavement that she really needs the aid of some strong friend—ah, I think that is the coroner entering. We shall be just in time to hear what Doctor Gray and the sheriff will report."

"You are going to stick round in the background, eh?"

"For a short time," said Nick. "Later, unless I am much mistaken, Chick, there will be plenty for us to do."

They had lingered briefly near the rear door from which they had emerged, both fixing in memory a mental picture of the scene, and noting the possibilities the surroundings presented, giving rise to such strange and startling developments that the case became one of the most remarkable in the career of the famous detective.

The Deacon residence faced south, fronting on Camden Avenue, from which it stood back some thirty yards. East of it was a tennis court, extending nearly to White Street, the east boundary of the estate. Back of the tennis court was the rear wall of the commodious building used for the making of the physician's remedy, and occupied by the Deacon Drug Company. This building faced north, fronting on King Street.

The west boundary of the estate was Parker Street, flanking the west side of the residence, also the laboratory building, which fronted on King Street. This building was a two-story structure of brick and stone, the upper part of which was used for storage purposes. Built out from its rear wall was the annex mentioned. It was a low, porchlike structure of stone, having a single window in each side, and a door directly opposite, and some thirty yards from the back door of the physician's dwelling, enabling him to have passed easily from one to the other.

A high boxwood hedge flanked the entire west side of the estate, dividing it from Parker Street, with a narrow strip of lawn between it and the side both of the house and the laboratory building.

Through a gate in the hedge, watched with morbid curiosity by the throng of people gathered in Parker Street, an elderly, professional-looking man was entering, who, Nick had rightly inferred, was the district coroner.

Seeing them coming from the house, he supposed them friends of the physician, and he waited for them to join him.

"I am Doctor Burdick, the coroner," said he, gravely introducing himself. "This is sad news, gentlemen, terribly sad. Doctor Deacon and I were very old friends. I cannot realize that he has taken his own life, an act so unlike him, so very unlike him. Such a valuable and exemplary life, too! Tell me the particulars and what is known about——"

Nick checked him with a gesture, saying quietly:

"Doctor Gray and Sheriff Bragg are inside. They can inform you better than I."

The coroner hardly waited for the last. He hurried into the annex, while Nick and Chick paused on the threshold and sized up the scene within.

There had been no great change since the fatality was discovered. The gas had been dispelled through the open windows. Pending the arrival of the coroner, the body of the dead physician had not been moved, but remained as Mr. Richard Chester had found it.

The annex contained only a single room. It was about fourteen feet square. An open roll-top desk stood in one corner. Near by was a cabinet of medical books, also a table covered with medical journals. In one of the walls was a mock fireplace, containing artificial logs, the gas heater mentioned. Set into the wall between the annex and the laboratory was a small steel safe of modern and superior type, the door of which appeared to be closed and locked.

Doctor Deacon was seated in his swivel chair. It was turned partly around from his desk, however, so that he faced in the direction of the safe. He had pitched to one side, his left arm hanging over that of the chair, his head awry, his right hand on his lap, and his feet thrust forward. Plainly enough, he had been dead many hours.

The four men who had been making a cursory investigation while waiting for the coroner were still in the room. Doctor Gray was a young practitioner, but evidently a keen and practical man. Sheriff Bragg was tall and gaunt, a dark man of fifty, thin-featured, with a drooping black mustache.

Both Thornton and Chester were about thirty years of age, and of similar build, erect and well set up; the former a man of fair complexion, with a clean-cut, intellectual face; while Chester was quite the reverse, being dark and swarthy, with a much more forcible and aggressive type of countenance.

A finely formed young woman was standing in the doorway to the laboratory. She was Stella North. She was talking in whispers with two younger girls, who had entered the laboratory with her a few minutes before. All appeared deeply affected by the violent death of their employer.

Doctor Burdick seemed to take in all the features of the scene nearly as quickly as Nick himself, for he at once began his inquiries and investigations, merely nodding to all and placing a gentle hand on the bowed gray head of his dead friend.

"What has been done here?" he asked, addressing both Doctor Gray and the sheriff. "Are things about as you found them?"

"As Dick Chester found them," corrected Sheriff Bragg, in blunt and sonorous tones. "He is the one who discovered the body. It has not been moved."

"Except in so far as I disturbed it to learn the probable cause and time of death," put in Doctor Gray. "There seems to be nothing to it, Burdick, but a plain case of suicide. There is no evidence of murder, nor anything that warrants even a suspicion of crime. Neither is an accident theory tenable. The gas was flowing from this heater in the fireplace. Assuming that Doctor Deacon had it lighted when alone here late yesterday afternoon, however, nothing could have disturbed the heater sufficiently to extinguish the flame and leave the gas flowing."

"Was there no draft?"

"None whatever. The door to the laboratory was closed, Chester states, also that leading outside. One window was open a couple of inches at the top, but that could not possibly have admitted wind enough to have extinguished the flame from the heater. It is quite difficult to blow out an ordinary gas light, even, to say nothing of such a heater as this. It appears plain enough that Doctor Deacon must have turned on the gas and for some unknown reason ended his life."

"Things are not always what they seem," replied Doctor Burdick, after listening patiently. "We must not go too fast. Who is the last person known to have seen Doctor Deacon alive?"

"I am," said Thornton, in a calm, manly way, though his attractive face was very pale, and his voice imbued with sadness.

"That was when?"

"I finished taking the dictation of two long letters just before five o'clock, and I then left Doctor Deacon alone here, and went to the house to transcribe my notes."

"How did he appear at that time?"

"As composed and cheerful as I ever saw him," said Thornton. "In spite of the somewhat convincing circumstances, I do not believe that he had any idea of suicide when I left him some twenty minutes before he died, if we are to judge from the time his watch stopped. That was broken, Doctor Burdick, against the arm of his chair. The hands pointed to quarter past five."

"Do you know the exact time that you left here?"

"It was five minutes to five when I entered the house. I noticed the clock in the library, wondering whether I had time to transcribe my notes before six, my supper hour."

"Did you leave Doctor Deacon seated in his chair?"

"I did."

"Was the heater lighted?"

"Yes."

"Was the door to the laboratory closed?"

"It was."

"I can testify to that, also," said Stella North. "I left the laboratory and locked the front door at ten minutes before five. I heard Doctor Deacon dictating to Mr. Thornton when I went out."

"Were you alone in the laboratory?" questioned the coroner.

"Yes."

"Are you sure of that? Could any person have been concealed there?"

"No, sir, positively," said Stella. "I am absolutely sure of that. I was alone there during the entire afternoon."

"Didn't Doctor Deacon enter the laboratory during the afternoon?"

"He did not, sir," Miss North firmly asserted. "Doctor Deacon was in the habit of spending most of each afternoon in this office. He lighted the heater yesterday about four o'clock, and then he called Mr. Thornton from the house. He then closed the door leading into the laboratory."

"There appears to have been only twenty minutes, then, from the time you left him, Mr. Thornton, until he died," said Doctor Burdick. "If any person entered the annex during that interval——"

"That is quite improbable, Doctor Burdick," said Stella, interrupting. "I brought that up while talking with these two girls, both of whom are employed in the manufactory. They label the bottles and boxes containing Doctor Deacon's cancer remedy, and both work near windows commanding a plain view of the annex. Both saw Mr. Thornton come out just before five, and are sure that no person entered during the next hour, when their work ended."

Both girls hastened to corroborate these statements, saying with convincing assurance that they were positive that no person entered the annex after Frank Thornton came out and went to the physician's residence.

"It was broad daylight until after six," Doctor Burdick remarked, after hearing them. "It seems quite improbable that any person with murderous intent would have taken the risk of being seen either from the street, or the windows mentioned. He would almost surely have been noticed."

"Besides," added Stella, "both girls saw Mr. Chester when he went home and returned soon after five. He came directly by the annex, and he would have been likely to see any stranger in the grounds, or near the laboratory building."

Doctor Burdick turned with an inquiring gaze at Chester.

"Is that so?" he asked. "What occasioned your passing so near here at that time?"

"I always come this way from the manufactory when going home, or to the building," Chester quickly explained, pointing from one of the side windows of the annex. "I board in that house across Parker Street."

"I see." Doctor Burdick nodded, glancing from the window.

Nick Carter also glanced in the direction indicated. Directly across the street was a large, square house, from the front windows of which could be plainly seen the side grounds of the Deacon estate, also the laboratory and annex.

"I met with a mishap while at work about half past four," Chester further explained. "I upset a vat of drugs and chemicals that were being compounded for medicinal use, and saturated the left sleeve of my undershirt nearly to the shoulder. I had no coat on, and the sleeve of my linen shirt was rolled up. Until combined with other ingredients, the compound I was mixing has a very irritating effect upon the skin, which necessitated changing my undershirt, or cutting off the wet sleeve. I decided to do the former, rather than sacrifice the shirt, so I hastened home to do so. That is why I happened to pass here at that time."

"Was that before Mr. Thornton left?" Doctor Burdick inquired.

"I am not sure," replied Chester. "I did not see Mr. Thornton."

"It was before Mr. Thornton came out, sir," said one of the girls with Miss North. "I saw Mr. Chester when he passed the annex, and Mr. Thornton came out a couple of minutes later. I saw Mr. Chester returning about quarter past five."

"I guess that's correct," said Chester, with a nod of approval. "I heard a clock in the boarding house strike five while I was changing my shirt."

"How near did you come to the annex, Mr. Chester, when returning at quarter past five?" Doctor Burdick blandly inquired.

"Within twenty feet, as near as I can tell. I came through the hedge gate and passed back of the house, as I always do."

"As near, would you say, as when you detected the odor of gas this morning?"

"Yes, I would say so."

"I only inquire because, if Doctor Deacon died of asphyxia at that time, I wonder that you did not then smell the escaping gas, as well as you did this morning."

Chester colored quickly and frowned, with a resentful light leaping up in his dark eyes, despite the fact that no covert insinuation was intended.

"I cannot say why I did not detect it, Doctor Burdick, if a sufficient quantity of gas was then escaping," he replied a bit curtly. "Perhaps it was because I was hurrying back to my work, or possibly because more air was stirring this morning, wafting the odor toward me. I only know that I did not smell it yesterday afternoon, and that I did this morning."

"I don't know that it is in any degree material," Doctor Burdick replied, in unruffled tones. "If no person entered this room after Mr. Thornton left it, as now seems probable, and if the flame of the heater was not extinguished by accident, in which case Doctor Deacon certainly should have discovered it in time to prevent asphyxiation, we really are compelled to believe that he put out the heater and then turned on the gas with suicidal intent."

"Surely!" Doctor Gray coincided. "That is the only conclusion consistent with all of the circumstances and the testimony of these people. As I said when you came in, Doctor Burdick, there is nothing else to it."

Nick Carter saw that the coroner was leaning strongly to this opinion, and that his investigations might be too superficial to bring out the truth.

"I guess it's time for me to butt in," he whispered to Chick, while Doctor Gray was speaking.

"Are they missing something?"

Nick nodded. Then, stepping into the room, he said, in a quietly impressive way:

"Perhaps, Doctor Burdick, you will not object to a hint from a stranger."

Instantly, every eye was turned upon the detective, though his identity was not even suspected.

"No, no, certainly not," Doctor Burdick said quickly. "A hint? What do you mean, sir?"

"Regarding the open window," said Nick. "That is entirely inconsistent with suicidal intent. No man bent upon killing himself with gas would have left a window open a couple of inches, even, knowing it would permit part of the gas to escape, or admit enough fresh air to prolong his suffering. Doctor Deacon was much too wise a man to have overlooked that," Nick pointedly added.

His hearers stared. Most of them were nonplused by this telling shot from a total stranger. The coroner looked perplexed and more thoughtful, while Sheriff Bragg blurted impulsively:

"By thunder, sir, that's true—too true for a joke! The records show that persons who commit suicide by gas shut all doors and windows."

"Most of them go even farther than that," said Nick significantly. "They lock the doors and windows to guard against intruders and the prevention of their designs. It appears, nevertheless, that Doctor Deacon also left this outer door unlocked."

Doctor Burdick checked another remark that was rising to the lips of the sheriff. He silenced him with a gesture, then said quickly to Nick:

"Those are strong points, sir, against the conclusion at which I had nearly arrived. In fact, sir, they seem to knock it on the head."

"I think so," said Nick.

"But, on the other hand, how can we attribute this to an accident, or a crime?" Doctor Burdick demanded perplexedly. "There is no evidence of either, nothing denoting that——"

"When convincing evidence is lacking in such cases, Doctor Burdick, it is always wise to look for a motive," Nick interrupted. "Was there anything here that a criminal may have wanted to steal? Notice that the safe door is closed, but the handle shows that the bolts are not thrown into their sockets, and that the safe is not locked. Wouldn't it be wise to see whether anything is missing?"

Before the last had left Nick's lips, Frank Thornton had rushed to the safe with a look of alarm on his pale face. He threw open the door and looked in, quickly pulling out a small steel drawer from an interior compartment. Then he started up with a cry of dismay, shouting excitedly:

"You are right, sir, as I have felt from the first. This is neither suicide nor accident. It is a case of murder, deliberate and cold-blooded murder! This safe has been robbed. A document of priceless value has been stolen. Doctor Deacon's secret formula is missing."

## CHAPTER III.

### ON A PLAIN TRAIL.

Nick Carter was not surprised at the discovery resulting from his observations. He had felt sure from the moment he viewed the scene that Doctor Deacon was not a suicide, that his death was not accidental, but the result of a remarkably crafty and singularly committed murder.

How had it been accomplished? Why had Doctor Deacon not detected the odor of escaping gas? His body bore no signs of violence, denoting that he had been overcome and was unconscious before the gas was turned on. He was seated in his swivel chair precisely as Thornton claimed to have left him.

By whose hand, moreover, could the crime have been committed? If the testimony of the several witnesses was reliable, it did not appear that any person could, after Thornton's departure, have entered the annex during the interval in which the murder must have been committed, if the time was definitely established by the victim's broken watch. The door had been under constant observation. The same was true of the window that was slightly open at the top. The other window was securely locked.

How and by whom, then, under such conditions, had the gas been turned off long enough to extinguish the flame of the heater, and then left flowing? To repeat, moreover, why had Doctor Deacon not detected the suffocating odor?

Nick Carter had asked himself these questions, though most of them did not immediately occur to his companions, who heard, with augmented dismay, Thornton's excited declarations.

Doctor Burdick quickly took the ribbons again, however, and tackled the tragic problem from the standpoint that Nick had presented.

"Hush! Compose yourself, Thornton," he commanded, gazing a bit sternly at him. "You are standing in the presence of death. This is not a time and place for excitement, but for calm and serious investigations. Are you sure of what you said, that something of great value has been stolen from the safe?"

Thornton did not resent the doctor's austerity. He drew himself up in manly fashion and governed his feelings, saying with significant emphasis:

"You are a physician, Doctor Burdick. You should know the value of such a document."

"You mean——"

"I mean Doctor Deacon's secret formula for his cancer remedy, a secret known by him alone, a curative that has made him famous and started him on the highway to vast wealth and——"

"One moment," Doctor Burdick interrupted. "The value of Doctor Deacon's great discovery is so well known that comments are needless. But how do you know, Mr. Thornton, that the secret formula was in this safe?"

"I saw him put it there, Doctor Burdick."

"When?"

"When I joined him here yesterday afternoon," Thornton earnestly asserted. "He had just sealed a copy of the formula in a strong linen envelope. There on his desk is the stick of wax he had been using. I never can forget, Doctor Burdick, the fervor with which he spoke to me. I was his confidential secretary, you know. He spoke more freely to me than to others."

"What did he say to you, Mr. Thornton?"

"He told me what the envelope contained, and he showed me the seals and the superscription. He said that he had been making a new copy of the formula in Latin, and that the envelope contained the only copy in existence, save that in his own head. He said that his beloved niece, Claudia Deacon, would become the sole possessor of his secret after his death. The sealed envelope was addressed to her, Doctor Burdick, and was marked strictly private."

"And you saw Doctor Deacon place it in this safe?" questioned the coroner, more gravely.

"I did," Thornton forcibly repeated. "I saw him slip it into this drawer, then partly close the door of the safe."

"He did not completely close it?"

"No, sir. I do not know who completely closed it—unless that was done by the thief, by the miscreant who evidently ended the life of this eminent old man."

"That now seems more than probable," said Doctor Burdick. "Was Doctor Deacon in the habit of keeping a copy of the formula in that drawer?"

"Yes, sir, he was."

"Do you know who and how many knew of that?"

"I do not, sir. Very few, I imagine."

"Do you think that Doctor Deacon, when speaking of his death, had any apprehensions that it might soon occur?"

Nick Carter did not hear Thornton's response. He was not specially interested in this line of inquiry at that time. He had edged nearer the laboratory door, where Stella North was still standing. After a moment he turned to her and inquired in a whisper:

"Where is the stairway leading to the basement?"

She regarded him with a look of surprise, replying quietly:

"There is no basement under this building."

"No? Where, then, is the gas meter?"

"It is in the cellar of the house, sir, I believe."

"H'm, I see," Nick murmured carelessly. "This building is piped from the dwelling, then."

He appeared to attach no great importance to the fact. He rejoined Chick at the outer door a moment later, nevertheless, and withdrew unobserved from the annex.

"We will return to the house," he said quietly.

"You suspect something more?"

"Yes. If all we have heard is true, Chick, there is only one way by which this trick could have been turned."

"The killing of Deacon?"

"Exactly."

"How so?"

"By means of the gas meter," Nick explained. "By stopping the supply for a few seconds, causing the flame in the heater to expire, and then turning on the gas again."

"By Jove, that may be the way it was done," said Chick, as both hastened toward the rear door of the house. "Only a crafty rascal, however, would have thought of that."

"The entire job is that of a crafty rascal," Nick replied, a bit grimly. "We must find a positive clew to his identity, if possible, before Burdick and Sheriff Bragg get wise. We'll see what can be learned in the cellar."

Watching from the library window, Claudia Deacon saw them approaching, and she joined them in the rear hall when they entered the house.

"What can you tell me?" she asked anxiously. "What is suspected, Mr. Carter?"

"Nothing at all definite at present, Miss Deacon," Nick replied kindly, temporarily evading her inquiries. "Do not expect too much of me. It will take a little time for us to get in our work. I feel quite sure, nevertheless, that I will not disappoint you," he added encouragingly.

"Thank you for that, Mr. Carter," she said gratefully. "I will try to be content for the present."

"I now wish to visit the basement," said Nick. "I suppose that is where the gas meter is placed."

"Yes, sir. I will go with you."

"Merely show me the stairway. I prefer that you shall not go down. There is a pipe, I understand, that runs from this cellar to the laboratory building."

"Yes, sir," said Claudia, pausing at the top of the stairs. "It was laid when the laboratory was built. The meter is nearly under the kitchen pantry."

"I shall find it," Nick replied, starting down the stairs and winking to Chick to close the door.

Chick closed it quietly and followed him.

The stairs led down to a main cellar nearly under the middle of the house. On one side was a laundry room, on the other, two large coal bins and an inclosed brick furnace.

"By Jove, it's a remarkably light cellar," Chick observed, while he followed Nick down the stairs.

"True. There appears to be a window, or—ah, this explains it. Here is a bulkhead door."

"Open, too."

"Yes, wide open."

"Isn't that a bit strange?" Chick questioned. "Wouldn't the housekeeper have been too upset this morning to have thought of coming down to open it? Hasn't it been open since yesterday?"

"That's a pertinent question," Nick replied. "We'll find out later."

The door that had met their gaze was beyond the brick wall of the furnace, and nearer the rear of the cellar. It was in the side foundation wall, with a rise of five stone steps leading up to the level of the ground outside, to a slanting door divided in the middle, both sections of which were open and admitted the morning sunlight, which had occasioned Chick's first remark while descending the stairs.

Nick mounted two of the stone steps and looked out. Ten feet away, and running parallel with the side of the house, was the boxwood hedge dividing the lawn from Parker Street. Some six yards distant, in a line with the rear of the house, was the hedge gate, with a gravel walk leading to the kitchen door and to the walk running back to the laboratory.

Nick's brows had knit closer when he returned down the steps. His strong, clean-cut face wore a more thoughtful expression.

"We will inquire about this," he repeated. "It suggests new possibilities, providing I am right regarding the meter. We'll have a look at it. We can tell, perhaps, whether it has been tampered with recently, in which case—— Wait! Stop a moment!"

Nick halted abruptly a few feet from the bulkhead door. The cement floor ended at that point, beyond which was the darker extreme rear end of the cellar, with a floor of damp earth and clay, in which several footprints were quite plainly visible. These had caught Nick's eye, and he crouched to examine them.

They evidently had been made by a man's shoes. They ran in two lines from the edge of the cement floor to the gas meter, which was on a block of wood near the rear foundation wall. Part of the imprints pointed one way, part the other, showing plainly that some one had been to and from the meter, near which were several impressions, indicating that the man had stood there for a short time, at least.

"By Jove, Nick, these are deucedly significant," Chick muttered, while both hastened to inspect them. "Some man has recently been here. Did he come from upstairs, or through that bulkhead door?"

"That's an open question," said Nick. "The imprints end at the edge of the cement, and none shows which way he then turned."

"But these near the meter show that he stood here for a time, and, evidently, was at work on the meter," Chick pointed out. "The depth of some of them, with the spread of his feet and the angle at which they were placed, shows plainly enough that he was exerting himself with a tool of some kind, probably a small monkey-wrench."

"Yes, very probably," Nick dryly agreed, then inspecting the meter and pipes with a lens. "This nut that governs the flow of gas has been recently turned in both directions. Notice that there is no dust on it, though the pipe in which it is set is covered with dust. It was rubbed from the nut when the wrench was used. The fact that none has since collected shows that this was very recently done."

"As recently as yesterday?"

"Without a doubt."

"This certainly confirms, then, your theory as to how the crime was committed," said Chick. "If these imprints——"

"Notice one peculiarity in them," Nick interrupted. "Both shoes had a small iron plate on the heel."

"Surely. The mark of it is quite plain."

"The wearer has a tendency to run down his heels on the outer edge. He has them reënforced, therefore, with the small, crescent-shaped plates that may be bought of any shoe dealer, and which are fastened with spindles driven into the heel."

"I've seen them," said Chick. "If these impressions——"

"They show something more," Nick again interrupted. "Notice the depth of the heel prints, compared with those of the soles. They are so much deeper and more distinct that—— Hark! Some one is coming. This way and lie down. We'll find out who, and for what."

## CHAPTER IV.

### BRAGG GETS IN HIS WORK.

Nick Carter's ears did not deceive him. He thought he heard approaching steps on the gravel walk leading to the bulkhead door. Abruptly ending his discussion of the footprints, leaving unuttered his deduction from the relative depth of the sole and heel prints, he drew Chick back of several boxes and barrels near a corner of the cellar.

"Keep quiet," he whispered. "We'll see what's doing."

Both crouched in a position enabling them to peer between the barrels and boxes.

They had not long to wait. The footsteps came nearer. A shadow fell upon the stone steps. A lank, angular figure stole quickly down and into the cellar—the gaunt figure of the county sheriff, Alton Bragg.

There was much of the weird and demoniac in his looks and movements just then. He appeared inspired with a sort of devilish eagerness. His deep-set black eyes had a feverish gleam and glitter. His thin features were drawn and twitching, his mustache bristling, his yellow teeth exposed, like those of a dog about to bite.

He crept down the steps and into the cellar, much as a redskin would have entered the cabin of a sleeping foe. He glanced sharply around, listened for a moment, and then began a hurried inspection of the gas meter and the earth floor.

"H'm, just so!" thought Nick, intently watching him. "He may not be as big and blundering a fool as he looks. He has hit upon the same theory as mine—or did some one suggest it to him? That's the important point. I must find out."

Bragg's gaunt face had lighted wondrously. Exultation danced in his eyes. He was quivering with excitement. He was then on his hands and knees, crawling from one footprint to another, measuring some and studying each with the avidity of a stage sleuth in a blood-curdling melodrama.

Nick Carter was smiling inwardly, while Chick had some difficulty in suppressing an audible laugh.

A sudden decided move by Bragg relieved them of longer restraint. He sprang up, cracked his knuckles hard against his forehead, as if to accelerate the mental activity within, and then he bolted to the stone steps and vanished in the direction of the laboratory.

"Solid ivory," declared Chick, laughing. "That's what his head is made of, Nick, or that crack on his frontispiece would have fractured it. He's a bonehead, pure and simple."

Nick smiled a bit grimly.

"Boneheads are sometimes troublesome," he replied. "I think I know on whom he will light, and we may not find it easy to shake him off."

"That so?" inquired Chick, more gravely.

"I'm quite sure of it, also, that there may be more to be done here than two can easily accomplish. Go upstairs and telephone to Patsy Garvan," Nick added, referring to his junior assistant. "Give him a hint at what's doing, and tell him to join us here as quickly as possible. Bid him come in disguise and see one of us on the quiet."

"I've got you," said Chick, turning to the stairs.

Nick then hastened up the stone steps and returned to the laboratory annex. He was less than a minute behind the county sheriff. He heard no sound from within when approaching the partly open door. The stillness was not broken by the voice of the coroner, even, and instead of immediately entering, Nick paused outside and peered between the door and the casing.

None in the room observed him. The body of the physician had been laid upon the floor and covered with a cloth. Chester was then talking in low tones with Miss North and the two girls in the laboratory doorway.

Doctor Gray had made ready to depart, but a whispered conference between the coroner and the sheriff was causing him to linger on the scene.

Doctor Burdick appeared unusually grave.

Sheriff Bragg's gaunt face had lost none of its intense earnestness. He looked like a man who felt that he had accomplished something extraordinary, and which had given him a mental grip on every detail of the terrible crime.

Thornton was standing apart from the others. It was as if he already stood alone under the black cloud. He was eying the sheriff suspiciously, but could hear nothing the latter was saying. He seemed to feel instinctively, nevertheless, that he was the subject of the whispered discussion, that the look on Bragg's face was a menace, and his own brows began to knit ominously over his sober blue eyes.

The whispered conference ended very soon after Nick arrived outside. The sheriff drew back a few steps and edged to a position between Thornton and the door, while the coroner remarked with affected carelessness:

"I think you may be right, Mr. Bragg."

"I reckon I ain't fur out o' the way," Bragg vouchsafed confidently.

"You have, at all events, made your views perfectly plain. By the way, Mr. Thornton," Doctor Burdick added, turning to him; "how long did it take you to typewrite the two letters Doctor Deacon had dictated?"

Thornton gazed at him intently.

"Less than an hour," he replied.

"It was then nearly six o'clock?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you been in the habit of signing Doctor Deacon's letters for him?"

"I have not." Thornton shook his head. "He always signed them himself."

"But he did not join you in the house," said Doctor Burdick. "Why did you not bring the letters out here for him to sign?"

"Because he had told me to leave them on the library table, saying that he would sign them later and mail them," Thornton calmly explained. "There is a letter box on the corner."

"You did so?"

"I did."

"Were you alone in the house?"

"Yes. Claudia and Mrs. Grant were both away."

"Have you a key to the house?"

"I have a key to the side door, but I did not use it. The back door was left unlocked for Doctor Deacon to enter."

"You went in that way?"

"I did."

"Was it becoming dark in the house while you were at work? Did you require a light?"

"Yes. I lit the gas in the library, afterward putting it out. I left a dim light in the side hall for Doctor Deacon, however, when leaving the house."

"You inferred, I suppose, that he still was here?" said Doctor Burdick inquiringly.

"Yes, certainly."

"Did it not occur to you that he would have a light? You must have seen, when leaving, that the annex was not lighted?"

"On the contrary, Doctor Burdick, I neither saw nor thought anything about it," Thornton quietly declared. "I did not go out the back door. I left through the side door, sir, and went directly across the street to my boarding house. I did not even glance in this direction."

"I see," said Doctor Burdick. "You board in the same house as Mr. Chester?"

"Yes."

"What else did you do before leaving?"

"Nothing else," said Thornton tersely.

"Did you have any trouble in lighting the gas?"

"Trouble—no, sir, certainly not."

"It burned as well and brightly as usual?"

"I think so," said Thornton, manifestly perplexed. "Certainly, Doctor Burdick, I detected no difference."

"Why, in that case, Mr. Thornton, did you go down to the cellar before leaving the house?"

"To the cellar?"

"Yes. Why did you go down to inspect, or do something else to the gas meter?"

Doctor Burdick's face hardened perceptibly when he asked these questions.

Thornton gazed at him for a moment without replying. A tinge of red appeared in his cheeks, then faded quickly, leaving him looking more pale from the contrast.

Watching him intently, Nick Carter felt sure that the young man apprehended what was coming, though he still maintained his outward composure. Nick had no inclination to interfere. He wanted to see which way the cat was going to jump, and also what interest the others might betray in the outcome of the sensational situation.

Gazing steadily at the coroner, Thornton replied coldly after a moment:

"You could have done better, Doctor Burdick, than to have put your question in that form."

"You mean?"

"You should have asked me not why, but whether I went to the cellar."

"I already know that you did so, Thornton," Doctor Burdick replied a bit sharply. "Why you went there and what you did there is what I want to know. It will be useless for you to deny that you went to the cellar."

"Nevertheless, sir, I do most emphatically deny it."

"But——"

"There aren't any buts, sir," Thornton forcibly insisted. "I never in my life was in the cellar of Doctor Deacon's house. I do not know the way to the cellar. I do not know where the gas meter is located, nor even that there is a gas meter. I deny——"

"Oh, rats!" Bragg broke forth impetuously, unable longer to contain himself. "Tell the truth, Thornton. Your face gives your words the lie. So do your shoes and their heel plates. Prints of both are in the cellar floor close to the meter. Confess that you turned the gas off, then on again, and thus——"

"Stop a moment, sheriff," Doctor Burdick now interrupted. "Let me continue to question——"

"Question be hanged!" cried Bragg, irrepressible. "Accuse instead of question. His guilt shows in his face."

"That's right, Bragg, for fair," chimed in Chester, who had wheeled round and was gazing directly at the accused man. "His face certainly tells the story. He's as white as a sheet."

"What do you mean, Mr. Chester?" Thornton icily demanded. "What do you think is 'right'?"

"What the sheriff is saying, of course," Chester curtly retorted. "He must have some good reason for saying it. Besides, you were the last to see the murdered man alive. You admit that you left him alone here. Who but you knows how you left him? He may, for all we know, have been sound asleep in his chair. You could have gone to the cellar. You were alone in the house. None would have been the wiser, providing——"

"Stop right there, Chester. Do you mean to imply——"

"Oh, you know what I mean, Thornton. Everybody knows, as far as that goes, that Doctor Deacon opposed certain aspirations of yours because you have no bank account. This was one way to get it, one way to overcome his opposition. His secret formula will enrich his niece, and if Claudia Deacon can stand for the killing of——"

But Mr. Richard Chester went no farther with his scurrilous insinuations.

Something like a half-smothered roar broke from Thornton. He had been listening as if dazed by what he had heard—until he heard the name of Claudia Deacon so foully mentioned.

Then all the fiery passion that dwells deep in such men broke bounds with volcanic violence. Thornton's fist shot straight out from his shoulder. As quick as a lightning flash it landed squarely on the jaw of the speaker—a blow that sent Chester crashing to the floor, senseless, bleeding, and with every muscle quivering.

"You foul-tongued cur!" Thornton cried, livid to the lips. "Do you bring her name into this——"

Screams from Miss North and the frightened girls drowned his passionate words.

No observer among the several men in the room could have prevented the blow. Doctor Burdick vainly attempted to interfere, nevertheless, and, in another moment, Sheriff Bragg had seized the angry man and was forcing him against the wall.

"No more of that, Thornton, no more of that," he cried harshly. "You are under arrest. Do you hear? You are under arrest and——"

"Oh, that's all there is to it, Bragg, if I am under arrest," Thornton interrupted more calmly, shaking himself free from the sheriff's grasp. "I will submit without resistance, and speak when the proper time comes. All I want now is to use the laboratory telephone—and I'm going to use it, too, in spite of you."

Thornton turned quickly away and strode into the laboratory, while Sheriff Bragg yielded to a sign from Doctor Burdick and merely followed him.

Nick Carter did not enter the room. Instead, he turned quickly around to one side of the laboratory, and paused under a window. Looking in cautiously, he saw Thornton hurriedly seeking a name in the telephone directory, which he found after a few seconds.

Then, listening, Nick heard him call the desired number. It was that of his own telephone in his Madison Avenue residence in New York City.

"H'm, just so!" he muttered. "He now wants me, also, but the girl got in her work ahead. Trust feminine intuition to anticipate trouble. Well, well, I must pull him out of it, if possible, and put a crimp in this man Bragg. He's like a bull in a china shop. It certainly is up to me."

## CHAPTER V.

### NICK TAKES A HAND.

Nick Carter did not wait to learn what information was imparted from his business office. He knew that it must be of a negative character, and he rightly inferred that Thornton would be speedily removed to the local jail.

Turning back, Nick saw Chick approaching from the house, and he hastened to intercept him and quickly tell him all that had occurred.

"Great guns!" said Chick expressively. "Thornton, then, is the man who wears heel plates?"

"That's what," Nick nodded. "I noticed one on each heel."

"He was alone in the house when the crime was committed, too, as Chester asserted. He could easily have gone down to the cellar, and, ordinarily, none would have been the wiser."

"True. He surely had an excellent opportunity to have turned the trick."

"There is one point, however, that I cannot fathom."

"What is that?"

"Why did not Doctor Deacon smell the gas?" Chick questioned. "What could have happened to him? Surely, according to the testimony of seemingly reliable witnesses, no one entered the annex after Thornton left it, up to the time when Deacon must have passed in his chips. That was only about twenty minutes. Either Thornton has lied, or something befell the old man that prevented his smelling the gas."

"I agree with you to that extent," Nick replied. "We must find out, if possible, just what happened to him."

"You don't think, then, that Thornton is guilty?" Chick inquired.

"Far from it," said Nick. "I am sure he is not."

"Sure of it, eh? For what reason?"

"One very convincing reason, Chick. It appears in the relative depth and distinctness of those sole and heel prints in the cellar floor."

"How so?"

"The heel prints are very deep and distinct, showing plainly that the wearer of the shoes must have walked quite heavily on his heels," Nick pointed out. "No man engaged in such a knavish job, however, would have done so. It had to be done quickly, and he instinctively would have stepped lightly. The fact that he did not, Chick, convinces me that a deliberate attempt was made to leave a clean-cut imprint of the heels."

"You think, then, that the crook knew Thornton wore heel plates, and that he designed to fix the crime upon him?"

"Exactly. Assuming Thornton to be innocent, moreover, the crook must have known that he was alone in the house, and, unless bent upon incriminating him, he surely would have walked on his toes. He would have taken no chance of being heard by the man upstairs."

"True again," Chick agreed. "That's dead open and shut. But whom do you suspect?"

"Naturally, Chick, I suspect the only other man seen near the house at that time."

"Richard Chester?"

"Certainly. Whether I am right and we can fix the crime upon him remains to be seen. Several circumstances point to him as the possible criminal. He boards in the same house as Thornton, and he may have stolen and worn a pair of the latter's shoes, afterward returning them to his room. We know he went there just before the crime was committed. He passed the annex while Thornton was there, and he may have seen something that led him to undertake this job."

"That's right, too."

"Furthermore, he may have given Bragg a tip to examine the cellar floor and the gas meter this morning," Nick added. "Bragg is not keen enough to have thought of it himself. If Chester gave him the hint—well, it's quite significant if he even thought of it."

"I see the point," said Chick.

"Seeing is not enough," Nick replied. "We must contrive to find positive evidence. We'll presently set about it. I first want another word with Claudia Deacon. Come with me."

They had paused only briefly near a rear corner of the laboratory building. As they were turning, they saw Sheriff Bragg and Thornton departing through King Street, the former grasping the arm of his companion. As Nick had inferred, the energetic sheriff was losing no time in removing his prisoner to safe quarters behind bolts and bars.

"I'd like to feel as good as he feels," Nick dryly remarked. "He's dead sure that he has nailed his man and fixed a fine feather in his own cap. I'll take that out of him a little later, Chick, as sure as you're a foot high. Come on."

Nick led the way into the house, and again conferred with Claudia, now telling her all that had occurred and what he suspected, and giving her such encouragement as the circumstances seemed to warrant.

Nick's inquiries then brought to light other significant facts about Mr. Richard Chester and his relations with Claudia Deacon and the murdered physician.

First, that Chester had been in Doctor Deacon's employ for about a year, that he previously had worked for Goff & Watson, a patent-medicine firm, with a manufactory in the same town, and that he had been discharged for insolence to the senior partner, Hobart Goff, and since had been on terms of bitter enmity with both members of the firm.

Second, that Chester had undertaken to force his love upon Claudia since coming to work for her uncle, in spite of the fact that she had firmly repelled him and refused even to consider his aspirations, and that he regarded Thornton with bitter jealousy, knowing him to be a favored rival.

For Claudia frankly admitted that she and Thornton were deeply in love, despite that this mutual regard had been rigidly opposed by her uncle, who had had more ambitious aspirations for his handsome niece.

"Why, in that case, did he retain Thornton as his secretary?" Nick inquired, having brought out the above facts.

"Because he thought we had outwardly submitted to his wishes," Claudia explained. "Since he first learned of our love and refused to consider Frank's appeal for my hand, we have been very careful to hide our affection."

"I see," Nick observed. "The old, old story is constantly repeating itself the world over. Now, Miss Deacon, tell me what Chester did after coming out of the annex this morning. Did he come here to tell you of the fatality?"

"No, he did not come here, Mr. Carter. He shouted to me, however, and then ran as fast as he could to the boarding house to tell Mr. Thornton."

"How long was he absent?"

"He returned with Frank in a very few minutes."

"Ten minutes, or less?"

"Not longer than that, Mr. Carter."

"Now about the bulkhead door," said Nick. "Was it open yesterday?"

"Yes, sir. It is open nearly every pleasant day to admit the sunlight and keep the cellar dry."

"And closed at night?"

"Certainly."

"Who usually opened and closed it?"

"My uncle has always done so," said Claudia. "He wanted to be sure it was properly locked at night."

"Of course, then, neither you nor the housekeeper closed it before leaving here yesterday afternoon?"

"No, indeed. I am sure of that, Mr. Carter. It must have been open since yesterday morning."

"That's all, then," said Nick, rising. "I may not see you again to-day, but I will see Thornton and say what I can to encourage him."

"Be sure to tell him, Mr. Carter, that I am convinced of his innocence," put in Claudia, with tearful eyes.

"I certainly will," Nick assured her. "Until you hear from me again, however, be sure that you tell no one that I am making these investigations. I may accomplish more if that is not generally known."

"Trust me to be silent."

"And do nothing more about the matter," Nick added. "Leave it entirely to me."

"I will, sir," Claudia readily promised.

Nick nodded to Chick, and both hastened from the house, leaving by the front door, and pausing briefly in Camden Avenue. Less than an hour had passed since they had arrived. It then was only ten o'clock. Danny still was waiting with the touring car, though Nick now sent him to a public garage to await later instructions.

"Now, Chick, we must get in some quick work," he said earnestly. "Nothing but a Garrison finish will clean up this case and save that secret formula for Claudia Deacon. It has proved to be an evil formula for her uncle, a deadly discovery, in so far as he now is concerned, but it's up to us to make it something vastly different for this charming girl and her manly lover. We must do it, too."

"I'm with you," said Chick heartily. "The main thing just now, Nick, is to find and secure the formula before others can learn of what it consists."

"Exactly. That's the very point."

"You think that Chester took it from the safe?"

"I do."

"This morning?"

"Yes. I think he planned the whole job and nailed the formula when he discovered the fatality, or pretended to discover it. If he knew that the formula was in the safe and the door unlocked, it would have taken him only half a minute to remove it and close the safe door. He could have held his breath that long in the gas-filled room."

"Easily."

"He would have reasoned that he was taking a big risk, however, in keeping the formula in his pocket," Nick added. "He rushed over to the boarding house, therefore, ostensibly to tell Thornton of the fatality, but, in reality, to temporarily hide the formula in some safe place. That, at least, is what I now suspect."

"By Jove, that may be true!"

"I am going to act on that theory, at all events, and make a bid to verify all of my suspicions," said Nick. "I'm going to the boarding house and see what I can learn."

"That's a consistent move."

"In the meantime, lest we may be off the track to some extent, you slip into a disguise and begin to shadow Chester. It's barely possible that he still has the formula on his person, yet I'm averse to exposing our hands by subjecting him to a search."

"I see."

"It's ten to one that he has not left the laboratory building," Nick added. "You can easily find him, in that case, and keep an eye on his doings. Don't drop him as long as his conduct invites suspicion."

"Leave him to me," said Chick. "He'll get away with nothing when I get my lamps on him."

"Go ahead, then. We'll meet later and compare notes."

Chick hastened away and quickly vanished around the corner of King Street.

Nick made a detour of a near block and presently appeared in disguise at the front door of the lodging house. He did not ring, however, neither did he knock.

Instead, he listened intently for a moment, shot a swift glance in each direction to make sure he was not observed, and then he quietly tried the door—and found it locked.

That fact did not deter him, nor long detain him. He fished out a ring of skeleton keys, quickly selecting one that would serve his purpose, and then he noiselessly opened the door and entered the deserted, dimly lighted hall of the house.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE GIRL WHO BOLTED.

Nick Carter paused only for a moment in the hall of the boarding house. From a remote quarter in the rear he could hear the clatter of dishes, evidently being washed, also the voices of women in conversation, in neither of which he had any interest.

Glancing upward and seeing no one, he quietly mounted the stairs to the second hall. The doors of several adjoining rooms were open. From neither came a sound denoting that it was occupied.

Nick stepped to the nearest one, then entered it, when he saw with a glance at the articles on a bureau and chiffonier that the occupant was a woman. He at once withdrew quietly—and suddenly discovered that another person had been moving as quietly as he.

He came face to face with a girl who had just descended a back stairway, and who was then heading for a flight leading down to a side door of the house.

She was a slight, slender girl of about eighteen, with a lithe, sinuous figure, and a pertly poised head, crowned with frizzly auburn hair.

She was rather pretty. Her eyes were keen and bright, with the saucy sharpness of needles. She was clad for the street, wearing a blue hat and jacket, a white shirt waist and a blue skirt.

She appeared a bit surprised, as was Nick himself, when they met so suddenly; but she instantly overcame her perturbation.

"Dear me!" she exclaimed quietly, gazing straight at him. "Who are you?"

"I might ask the same of you," Nick said evasively.

"Well, you wouldn't get very wise from that, if you learn no more than I have."

Nick laughed lightly.

"You walk very quietly, my girl," said he. "I did not even hear you."

"I might say the same of you," she retorted, with a saucy cant of her head. "I did not hear you, either."

"I am looking for Frank Thornton's room," Nick now explained, glancing toward another open door.

"That isn't it," said the girl crisply. "That's Dick Chester's room. Mr. Thornton's is the opposite one."

"Ah, I see!"

"What do you want? He isn't there."

"I know it. He sent me to get something."

"Did the mistress let you in? Why didn't she show you which room?"

"She didn't see me," said Nick. "I found the door open and walked in. Do you board here?"

"Sure," said the girl, though she hesitated for the fraction of a second. "I have a room on the top floor. I can't pay the price down here. The higher one goes, you know, the cheaper they get. Any old room must do for Polly Leech."

"Is that your name?"

"That's what. Pauline Leech—pretty name, ain't it?" she added, with a giggle and a flash of her sharp eyes. "But this won't do for me, sir. I've got business to look after. So long!"

She turned without waiting for an answer and hurried toward the side stair.

"A fly little jade, that girl, unless I'm much mistaken," thought Nick, when she disappeared down the inclosed stairway.

Then he turned and entered, not Thornton's room, but that occupied by Dick Chester.

Though she had departed with manifest haste, evincing Nick's cursory opinion of her, Polly Leech did not go far after leaving him.

She stopped short on the stairs and listened. She heard him enter Chester's room. Then, with the stealth of a cat and a tread as light, she retraced her steps, darted across the hall, and up the back stairs she had descended only a few moments before.

Passing through an upper hall, she presently appeared on the front stairs, stealing noiselessly down to a point from which she could look over the baluster rail and see what the detective was doing.

Nick was then engaged in a hurried search in Chester's room. He suspected that the secret formula might have been hidden there when Chester ran over to tell Thornton of the fatality. The search proved vain, however, in so far as the stolen formula was concerned.

Nick found, nevertheless, an undershirt, the sleeve of which was darkly stained and still damp, which seemed to confirm Chester's story in explanation of his return home the previous afternoon.

In a wardrobe closet, moreover, Nick found a pair of lace shoes belonging to the suspected man. He took one of them and stepped into the room across the hall, where he compared it carefully with a pair belonging to Thornton, on which were a few particles of dark earth and clay, very like that of the cellar floor.

Nick also found, as he suspected, that the two men wore shoes of the same size.

Polly Leech, crouching on the stairs, did not dare risk being seen when Nick returned across the hall. She crept back to the upper floor, then down the rear stairs, darting noiselessly across the hall and down to the side door, where she paused only for an instant before hastening from the house.

Nick Carter, in the meantime, returned to Chester's room and replaced the shoe where he had found it. Then, approaching a side window overlooking Parker Street, he unexpectedly caught sight of a girl vanishing around a near corner—Polly Leech.

"H'm!" he muttered, with a rising suspicion. "Is that as far as she's got after departing so hurriedly? Her business evidently is not as important as she implied."

Nick did not then, however, attach any serious significance to the girl's movements. He had approached the window only to view the Deacon grounds and buildings from that point.

This side window overlooked Parker Street, and it was directly in a line with the rear wall of the laboratory building. One window of the annex, that which had been found open at the top, also the side and rear windows of the dwelling, and the open bulkhead door—all were plainly visible from this window in Chester's room.

"By Jove, this supplies another link in the chain," thought Nick, quickly sizing up the possibilities presented. "With dusk beginning to gather in the annex room, the faint light from the heater would have enabled him to see distinctly who was there, what he was doing, and whether the safe door was open.

"The bulkhead door can be seen through the hedge gate, but only from this window. The hedge hides it from all of the others, also from the street. The rascal could have stolen into the cellar and turned the trick in less than a minute, and with comparatively no risk of being seen. He must have had it all planned, too, and was waiting only a favorable opportunity.

"The question still is, however, as Chick said—why did not Doctor Deacon smell the gas? By Jove, I think I can find an answer to that question also."

Turning abruptly, Nick started to leave the room.

At the same moment, rising shrill and piercing from the lower hall, came the voice of a woman, evidently the landlady, shouting at the top of her lungs:

"Polly! Polly! Pol-ly!"

Nick paused in the hall.

"Pol-ly!" shrieked the woman once more, then: "Drat that girl—where is she? She is not worth her salt, the flighty minx! It's more trouble to keep run of her than to do her work myself. I'll fire her as soon as—well, who are you? What are you doing here?"

Nick was descending to the hall in which the irritated landlady was standing. He now knew that Polly Leech had deceived him, that she was a servant in the house, not a boarder. He at once reasoned, too, that there might be more doing under this roof than he had suspected.

"Pardon me, madame," he said suavely, smiling. "Mr. Thornton sent me to his room to bring something. I am just leaving. He could not come over just now, being unavoidably detained," Nick dryly added.

"Oh, very well, in that case," replied the woman. "But who admitted you? I did not hear the bell."

"Ncr did I ring it," said Nick. "A slender girl with auburn hair was going out as I came up the steps. She let me in."

"The jade!" exclaimed the landlady. "Oh, I don't mind because she let you in, sir, but because she's so thoroughly unreliable. She was a decent girl when she first came her six months ago, but she's gone from bad to worse."

"One of your servants?" questioned Nick carelessly.

"Yes. Polly Leech."

"She was quite well dressed. I supposed her one of your boarders."

"Well dressed, eh? She has gone for good, then, as she has been threatening. Well, I'm well rid of the saucy creature."

"Is her home here in town?"

"Home—no! I doubt that she has a home. She came here from Hoboken. If Hoboken has others like her, I hope they'll stay in Hoboken."

Nick bowed and smiled again, then left the house. His smile became a frown, however, as soon as he reached the street.

"What's the meaning of it?" he asked himself. "Why has she bolted stealthily at just this time? Is she in league with Chester, or what lies under the surface? By Jove, I think it may be necessary to learn what has become of this same Polly Leech."

Nick did not then deviate, however, from the course he was shaping. Ten minutes later, divested of his disguise, he rounded a corner in another part of the town and approached the local jail—just in time to come face to face with Sheriff Bragg, then departing.

## CHAPTER VII.

### GATHERED THREADS.

Though his walk had become a strut, with head several inches higher than usual, Sheriff Bragg had a streak of genuine honesty in his make-up. The moment he saw and recognized Nick as the man who had suggested robbery to the coroner, he thrust out his hand and cried:

"Oh, I say, sir, I reckon I owe you something."

"Owe me something, sheriff?" questioned Nick, smiling and shaking hands with him.

"That's what."

"But how so?"

"Waal, 'twas you that first put me on the right track this morning," said Bragg, with gruff frankness. "Not that I wouldn't have struck it, all right, sooner or later, mind you, for I'm some on a still-hunt in the criminal underbrush. But you sort o' expedited matters, as it were."

"I don't think I quite get you, Bragg," said Nick, still smiling. "What do you mean?"

"Waal, you asked that North girl about the gas meter, d'ye see?"

"Yes, I remember. Did she tell you?"

"No, not she," said Bragg. "But Chester got inquisitive and asked her what you questioned her about."

"H'm, I see."

"She told him, of course, and he then told me. That was the how of it."

"Ah, just so!" said Nick. He also saw, moreover, the covert way Chester had hastened to cast suspicion upon Thornton. He merely added, however: "But you owe me nothing for that sheriff. You would have hit upon it without aid from me."

"Aye, that's true, of course," Bragg was quick to reply. "Nothing much gets by me."

"I can imagine so."

"Having got my man in safe-keeping, I now am out to get all of the needed evidence," Bragg added, turning to go. "I can't stop longer, you see. Sorry, though, on my word."

Nick was not sorry, having no further use for the man. He had clinched another suspected point against Chester, however, and he now entered the jail and made himself known in strict confidence to the warden.

Five minutes later, in accord with his request, Nick was conducted to the cell in which Frank Thornton was then sitting in gloomy consideration of his unenviable situation.

"Well, you seem to be in wrong, Thornton," said Nick, entering and extending his hand. "I have called to ask you a question."

"Oh, you are the gentleman I saw shortly before my arrest," said Thornton, gazing at him. "I did not recognize you at first."

"I am some one else, also," smiled Nick.

"Some one else?"

"Yes."

"That beats me," said Thornton perplexedly. "I don't understand you."

"I am the man to whom you telephoned—but did not get."

"Not—not Nick Carter?"

"The same," said Nick, smiling. "You are in wrong, as I said, Mr. Thornton, but I am here to pull you out."

The cloud instantly vanished from Thornton's pale face. It appeared instantly transfigured. He was amazed, mystified, and would have begun to question, but Nick at once proceeded to explain the situation, and soon had told him just how matters stood, not neglecting to give him the loyal and loving assurance sent by Claudia Deacon.

"Really, Mr. Carter, I can hardly believe my own ears," Thornton then said gratefully. "You have made a new man of me. I did not know that Claudia had sent for you. I telephoned for you because I knew I was up against a tough game, and wanted the best detective on earth. I really am as innocent of this crime as you are."

"I believe you," sad Nick. "But I can spend only a short time with you this morning, Thornton, for there is much work to be done. You must answer a few questions for me as briefly as possible."

"I will do so," said Thornton eagerly.

"To begin with, then, what do you know about Polly Leech?"

"Very little about her. She is the chambermaid in my boarding house. She is not the type of girl I fancy."

"The chambermaid, eh?" said Nick thoughtfully. "By Jove, it may be that she——"

He did not say what he was suddenly led to suspect. Instead, he digressed abruptly and said:

"Her character is none too good, I take it."

"Far from it, Mr. Carter, I guess."

"Has Chester been friendly with her, as far as you know?"

"I think so," said Thornton. "I have seen them on the street late in the evening, also in several picture houses. I think, though, they recently have had a falling out."

"Why so?"

"I heard Chester order her out of his room a few mornings ago, when she came to put it in order. I have not seen them speaking together, moreover."

"H'm, is that so," said Nick. "She may be getting back at him."

"You mean that she——"

"Never mind what I mean, Thornton, just now," Nick interrupted. "Tell me, instead, what you know about Goff & Watson, for whom Chester used to work."

"I know only that they are makers of several patent medicines, the virtue of which is decidedly questionable," Thornton replied. "They are a couple of shysters, I guess, if the truth were told."

"Did they ever try to buy Doctor Deacon's secret formula?"

"Why, yes, now that you remind me of it," said Thornton; "but that was more than a year ago."

"Before Chester was discharged from their employ?"

"Yes, a short time before."

"Just so!" said Nick, with a subtle gleam in his eyes. "Now, Thornton, tell me just how Doctor Deacon appeared when dictating those two letters to you."

"Why, he appeared as usual, Mr. Carter, so far as I observed," said Thornton gravely.

"Not dazed, or confused?"

"Not at all, sir."

"He did not complain of feeling ill?"

"Not a word, Mr. Carter. I know, however, that he has been gradually failing for several months," Thornton added. "He seemed to lack much of his former strength."

"Did he appear drowsy while talking with you?"

"Why, yes, now that you suggest it," said Thornton quickly. "I remember that he yawned repeatedly while dictating the two letters. He did appear drowsy, but, perhaps, weary would be the better word."

"You may remember, too, that Chester asserted that you might have left Doctor Deacon sound asleep in his chair," Nick said pointedly.

"Yes, indeed, I remember that—the cur!" said Thornton, with a frown.

"Quite remarkable, isn't it, that he should have thought of that?" Nick added dryly.

"You mean?"

"Take it from me, Thornton, that was not a guess," said Nick. "Chester saw from the window of his boarding house that Doctor Deacon was sound asleep in his chair. That's why Doctor Deacon did not smell the gas."

"By Jove, that may be true, Mr. Carter."

"I am sure of it," Nick asserted. "That's all, Thornton. I'll see you later. I will see you when I bring Dick Chester here—to take your place."

Nick lingered only to shake hands with his grateful hearer, then hurriedly departed.

It then was nearly one o'clock, and Nick had no way of knowing where Chick then could be found. As he was turning the corner on which he had met Sheriff Bragg, however, Nick suddenly caught sight of a young man in a gray suit and a golf cap, who was crossing the street to intercept him.

This was none other than his junior assistant for whom he had sent—Patsy Garvan.

"Gee! I guessed right, chief," said Patsy, when they met. "I've been nosing around the Deacon place, and I picked up much of the case from people outside, but I could see nothing of you. I thought I might find you at the jail, for I heard that Thornton is under arrest."

"Have you seen Chick?" Nick inquired.

"Not hide nor hair of him."

"I have started him on Dick Chester's trail. I will tell you in a nutshell what I suspect, Patsy, and you must then hunt up and shadow a girl named Polly Leech. I'm going to give my attention to a patent-medicine concern, Goff & Watson. I suspect that they may be back of this whole job."

It took Nick only a very few minutes to outline the case so that Patsy understood it perfectly, and the latter then earnestly said:

"You leave the Leech girl to me, chief. I'll trace her, all right, and find out what's doing."

"Very good," said Nick approvingly.

"You're going after Goff & Watson, you say."

"I shall see them, at least, and try to get their measure," replied Nick. "Having been unable to buy Doctor Deacon's secret formula, they may have plotted to steal it."

"With the help of Dick Chester, of course."

"Exactly."

"His discharge, then, was only a blind."

"I think so."

"And his enmity for them since then only a pretense."

"Surely, in case I am right."

"Gee! I'd bank my pile on that, chief," Patsy declared confidently. "There's nothing else to it."

"There is very much more to it, Patsy, in that we must obtain positive evidence," Nick corrected. "Suspicions alone are not enough, far from enough. We must find absolute proofs, and also find that secret formula. Nothing else will suffice."

"That's true, chief, for fair," Patsy agreed. "I'll get after Polly Leech, then, at once."

"Do so," Nick directed. "Be governed by circumstances, if you find her, for there's no telling where I may be. Possibly, however, these threads that we are following will bring us together."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### CAUGHT HANDS DOWN.

Patsy Garvan, provided with a description of Polly Leech, and informed of her probable character and habits, was not long in picking up the trail of the girl after her departure from the boarding house.

Patsy made a bee line to the corner where Nick had last seen her. There he questioned a servant girl who was sweeping a sidewalk, and who not only was acquainted with Polly, and had seen her hurrying away that morning, but who also informed him that she frequently met Chester in an inferior hotel known as the Brisket House, where she occasionally drank and dined with him.

Learning that Polly had gone in that direction, and suspecting that she wanted to secretly meet or communicate with Chester, Patsy lost no time in seeking the hotel mentioned.

There he learned from a telephone-exchange girl that Polly was there half an hour before, that she had used one of the booth telephones, and talked with some person in the office of the Deacon Drug Company, after which she had directed a letter and hurriedly departed, presumably to mail it.

Finding that he could learn no more there, and deciding that he would head for the post office, hoping to see the girl by chance, Patsy left the hotel, and—discovered Polly Leech emerging from a restaurant on an opposite corner.

"Gee! There's the girl, now, as sure as death and taxes," he at once decided. "Auburn hair, turn-up nose, blue suit and white waist—zambo! It's a cinch!"

Patsy had not the slightest doubt of her identity. The expression on Polly's pert fact, moreover, denoted that she had important business in her head—having paved the way for it and satisfied the cravings of her stomach.

This was manifest, moreover, in the celerity with which she started off on a definite mission. She walked briskly up the street and brought up at a local trolley line, where she presently boarded a northbound open car.

Patsy boarded it also, taking a rear seat.

The car speedily left the town behind it. Twenty minutes brought it into a wooded section, through which the glistening sheen of a small lake presently could be seen in the near distance.

Polly Leech signaled for the car to stop. She alighted within thirty yards of a narrow lane making through the woods in the direction of the lake. Quickly turning her steps in that direction, she passed from view through the shrubbery skirting the road.

Patsy had already disappeared.

He had dropped from the opposite side of the car and found concealment back of some bushes. He remained only until the car had moved on, then stole across the road in search of his quarry.

He discovered Polly walking rapidly through the lane, and he stealthily followed her. Her course wound over the side of a hill, beyond which Patsy again lost sight of her, only to presently see her approaching a solitary bungalow, half hidden amid the trees, and fronting on the lake. It was entirely out of view from the road, and nearly two hundred yards from where Polly Leech had left the trolley car.

Patsy could see only one side of the rear wall of the low building. Connected with the rear wall was an open shed, sheltering a back door and a quantity of split wood, neatly piled. A telephone wire through the trees was also discernible.

A solitary man was seated on a narrow side piazza. He was in his shirt sleeves and smoking a cigar, which he threw away when he saw Polly approaching.

Listening, Patsy heard her greet him while still a short distance away.

"Hello, Dick!" she cried pertly. "I thought you'd land here before me. I stopped for a feed after phoning you. Been waiting long?"

"That, by Jove, must be Dick Chester," thought Patsy. "She phoned him from the Brisket House. He don't look, nevertheless, much pleased with the rendezvous. Where the deuce is Chick, moreover, if he was tracking this fellow. He ought to be somewhere in these parts."

Patsy could discover no sign of him, and his interest centered upon the couple near the bungalow—chiefly upon the man at that moment.

For Chester's swarthy face wore a frown as black as a thundercloud. He stepped down from the piazza, saying something that failed to reach Patsy's ears, though the threatening nature of it was plainly manifest in his looks and actions.

Polly Leech did not appear in the least alarmed. She laughed derisively, thrusting the man aside, and both then disappeared around a front corner of the house.

"Gee! What's the meaning of that?" Patsy asked himself, a bit surprised. "That don't look like being in league together. Has the chief cast a shoe in sizing up their relations? By Jove, I must find out definitely. I'll take a chance at that back door. The shed will shelter me."

Patsy lost no time in doing so. Making a short detour over the hill, he gained a point some little distance from the path that Polly had followed, and he then crept stealthily down through the shrubbery to the edge of a small clearing directly back of the house. To cross it required only a moment, and he then crouched close to the door under the overhanging roof.

The voices of the couple within could now be plainly heard by Patsy, as he peered through the keyhole and could see them in the front room, from which the kitchen was only partly divided by a partition of sheathing.

Polly Leech was laughing in a saucy, derisive way that was peculiar to her, and there was a gleam of malicious exultation in her sharp eyes.

Chester was regarding her with lowering gaze. He was pitched back in his chair, his feet thrust forward, his thumbs hooked through the armholes of his figured vest. He looked threatening, capable of anything desperate, and really as if tempted to throttle the girl then and there.

"What do you want here, anyway?" he demanded, these being the first words to reach Patsy's ears. "I told you I had other business when you phoned me."

"I know it," Polly curtly retorted. "But your business isn't more important than mine. You'll soon find that out. I'm here to recite my little verse, Dick, and you're going to hear it. You can bet your bundle on that."

"Go ahead, then, and recite it," Chester replied, with a growl. "I don't imagine you've chased out to my bungalow for nothing. What do you want? Out with it."

"You know what I want," said Polly more seriously.

"I'll be hanged if I do."

"Have you forgotten what you promised?"

"I've made many promises in my life."

"And have made one that you haven't kept."

"Only one?"

"Only one that I care anything about," snapped the girl more sharply. "But you're going to keep it, Dick, you're going to keep it."

"What promise is that?"

"Your promise to marry me."

"Humph!" Chester grunted, with a shrug of his square shoulders. "I guess not."

"You've got another guess, Dick."

"I told you a week ago——"

"That cuts no ice," Polly interrupted. "What you told me a week ago might have gone then, but now it don't amount to a little piece of cheese. You've been making love to me for six months, Dick, and you've promised time and again to marry me. Here's where I bob up and declare myself. You're going to make good."

"Marry be hanged!" Chester snarled impatiently. "You talk like a little fool. I'll hear no more of it."

"You'll hear all I have to say," Polly defiantly insisted. "I've got you where I want you, Dick, just where I want you. You'll hear me, all right, and make good—or I'll send you to the devil on a greased toboggan chute!"

"You will, eh?"

"You bet I will."

"What do you mean by that, Polly?"

Chester lurched forward in his chair with a sudden display of interest.

The girl also drew forward, and, spreading her hands on her knees, gazed straight at him.

"I mean what I say," she replied. "I've got you where I want you."

"But that don't explain——"

"Oh, I'll explain, all right," Polly cut in sharply. "I went up to your room to put it in order this morning. I got there, Dick, just in time to see you run across the street from the Deacon place. I knew by the look on your face that something had happened—or was going to happen."

"You——"

"Oh, wait a bit!" cried Polly. "I'll hand you straight goods, and all that's coming to you. I heard you on the stairs, and I reckoned you were coming to your room. So I ducked under the bed to see what you were after. I saw, instead, what you hid under the carpet—and I've got it!"

The last, uttered in shrill accents of mocking exultation, brought a vicious oath from her hearer. He sprang up with eyes ablaze and features distorted, crying fiercely:

"You she-devil! It was you, then, who took it! It was you who——"

"Oh, don't get gay," Polly cut in fearlessly. "I'm not afraid of you. You'll not harm me as long as I've got—what you took such long chances to get! You keep cool, Dick, and hold your horses. I'd better have it than some who might have got their meat hooks on it."

"By Jove, the chief was right!" thought Patsy, absorbed in the threatening altercation. "Chester ran to the house to hide the secret formula, and this jade saw him, and has nailed it. Gee whiz! That may prove lucky. It's a thousand to one that she cannot read Latin. We now may recover it before it falls into other hands."

Dick Chester seemed suddenly to realize, however, that Polly Leech spoke the truth, and that the precious formula might, indeed, have fallen into worse hands than hers, as far as he was concerned.

Though still frowning darkly, he drew back and lowered his threatening hand, saying hoarsely, half to himself:

"There is something in that—something in that."

"Sure there is, Dick," Polly quickly acquiesced. "There's a whole lot in it."

"Why did you take it?" Chester demanded.

"I've told you why."

"To force me to marry you, eh?"

"That's what, Dick," Polly replied, with a nod. "To force you into keeping your promise."

"You're a leech by nature, as well as name."

"I'm out for what I want, Dick."

"See here, this might be worse," Chester now declared less harshly, though Patsy detected a treacherous gleam in his eyes. "After all, Polly, we may be able to come to terms."

"My terms, Dick! Nothing else goes."

"When did you take the—the envelope?"

"Right after you went out with Thornton."

"Who saw you?"

"No one."

"Who knows you have it?"

"Only you, Dick."

"Have you opened it?"

"Not yet."

"Do you know what it contains?"

"Sure!" said Polly. "I heard people talking about it. It's the recipe for that cancer remedy Doctor Deacon was getting so much coin out of. Oh, I'm wise, Dick, all right."

"Let's open it," Chester abruptly suggested. "Let's see what——"

"See nothing!" Polly interrupted, with derision. "Do you think I was fool enough to bring it here? Not much! I'm over seven, Dick, and you ought to know it. You might pinch it from me, then chuck me into the lake. No, no, I'm too wise for that."

"Where have you put it, then?" snarled Chester, scowling again. "What have you done with it?"

"That's the stuff," thought Patsy. "Answer that question, my girl, and I'll do the rest. I'll have that formula before you can get your flippers on it again, as sure as——"

But there was nothing sure in Patsy's hazardous vocation. His train of thought ended abruptly, and his rising hopes were nipped in the bud.

So intent had he been upon the scene within, that he had had neither eyes nor ears for things behind him—until a cold, threatening voice now sent a sudden chill down his spine.

"Turn round from that door and shove up your hands! Up with them! Keep them up, too, or I'll pump you so full of lead that you'll weigh a ton!"

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE LAST STRAW.

Patsy Garvan was upon his feet and gazing at the speaker before his first word was fairly uttered.

Up went his hands, too, as had been directed.

For Patsy found himself gazing into the deadly black muzzle of a leveled revolver, aimed point-blank at his head.

Scarce six feet away, grim and threatening, in the bars of golden sunlight that penetrated the spreading branches of the nearer trees, stood two men who had approached as noiselessly as the surrounding shadows.

Leaving the trolley car that had followed that on which Patsy and Polly Leech had come from town, they had taken the same course over the hill, from the brow of which they had discovered Patsy crouching at the back door of the bungalow. Following the path down the hill, they had crept unheard around the corner of the house, and had been watching him several seconds before speaking.

One of them, he with the weapon, was a well-built, clean-cut man of forty, smoothly shaved, and with a strong, resolute cast of features, thin lipped and with the square, aggressive jaw of a bulldog.

The other was somewhat younger and not as tall, but was more compact and muscular, a man with a round, full face, a florid skin, and small, gray eyes, close set and sinister, like the eyes of a pig.

Patsy gazed at them with momentary dismay, thoroughly disgusted with this unexpected turn of affairs, and the threatening situation. Feeling sure that he was not known, however, and bent upon slipping out of his dilemma by means of some crafty subterfuge, he instantly hit upon a plausible explanation of his presence there, and his suspicious conduct.

"Oh, I say! Don't get gay with that gun," he quickly protested, hands in the air and pretending to be much alarmed. "I didn't know the girl had friends here. I meant her no harm. I wouldn't have hurt her—not on your life!"

"You close your trap, young fellow," snapped the man with a gun. "Keep your flippers well above your head, too, or you'll wish you had—if you have any wishes coming after this bulldog barks."

"But I——"

"Shut up! See what he has in his pockets, Bill. We'll find out who he is, in short order. Wait a bit! First sing out for Chester and have him bring a piece of rope. We'll bind this rat and make sure of him."

There was no occasion to sing out, however, for Chester had heard their voices, and, at that moment, opened the back door of the bungalow.

"Good heavens, Goff, what's the meaning of this?" he cried, in amazement. "What's wrong here?"

"Goff!" thought Patsy, noting the name, and at once hitting upon the truth. "The two patent-medicine shysters, Goff & Watson, as sure as fate. The chief was right. They are in with Chester in this job. But where in thunder are Nick and Chick? Have both gone lame completely?"

"Wrong enough!" Goff was saying, while the above flashed through Patsy's mind. "We caught this whelp looking through the keyhole and playing the eavesdropper."

"Perdition!" Chester gasped. "The devil you say!"

"What you've been saying in there is of more consequence," growled Goff, keeping a constant eye on Patsy. "You should have been alone here to meet us. Who is with you?"

"That fiery flame of mine—Polly Leech. She——"

"Hang it! Why did you——"

"Oh, don't go too fast, Bart," Chester interrupted. "You'll soon learn why she's here. It may be all for the best, providing we can find out what she has done with—but you'll understand. This fellow must first be disposed of and——"

"Bring a piece of rope," Goff again cut in. "Tie his hands behind him. Must I stand here and keep him covered all the while we discuss this infernal business? Lend him a hand, Bill, and bind the rat."

Chester had darted back into the bungalow, and he quickly reappeared with a piece of clothesline. Watson then strode back of Patsy, yanking his arms behind him and holding them while Chester securely bound them.

Patsy did not resist them, knowing that he would only incur rough handling, and he was then rudely forced into the house, the back door of which was quickly closed again.

Polly Leech, now looking a bit more pale and frightened, came near uttering a cry of increasing dismay when she saw Patsy's frowning face. Before it reached her lips, however, Watson growled harshly, thrusting Patsy to a chair:

"Now, young fellow, you give an account of yourself. Who are you and what do you want here?"

"I don't want anything, gents, on my word," Patsy again protested, seemingly much alarmed. "I meant no harm. I was on a trolley car with this girl, and—well, I thought she might stand for a pick-up. All I wanted was to get acquainted with her. So I got off the car when she did, and followed her down here. I didn't know who might be in the house, so I stole to the back door to find out. That's all there is to it, gents, on my word. I'm giving it to you dead straight."

"You're a liar!" snapped Polly, with returning nerve. "You can't put that over on us."

"It's the truth," Patsy insisted.

"You lie! I know you—I've seen you in New York."

"You have, eh?"

"That's what I have." Polly energetically nodded, with her dilated eyes snapping sharply. "Your name is Garvan. You're a detective—one of Nick Carter's push."

"Detective—Nick Carter's push!" gasped Chester, staggering and turning ghastly pale. "My Lord! It can't be that he is on this case. Do you know what you're saying, Polly?"

"Sure I know what I'm saying."

"And this fellow——"

"Oh, there's nothing to it," cried Polly. "I'm dead sure of him. Feel in his pockets, and you'll find the proof."

The suggestion was quite unnecessary. Hobart Goff, looking white and apprehensive, was already pulling aside Patsy's coat and diving into his pockets. What he quickly produced from them was ample to confirm the girl's assertions—two revolvers, a pair of handcuffs, a searchlight, a steel twister, and several letters bearing Patsy's name and address.

"Handle those things carefully, mister," he coolly remarked, when Goff put them on the table, seeing that further subterfuge was useless. "I might need them presently."

"You're not likely to need them again, young fellow, if——"

"That's right," Patsy cut in. "There is always an alternative."

"You're working for Nick Carter, then, are you?"

"Sure!" Patsy coolly exclaimed.

"Is he at work on this case?"

"Give it up. You'll have to ask me an easier one."

"You mean that you won't tell?"

"You heard what I said. Size it up as you like."

"By Heaven, we'll make him tell," Chester fiercely snarled. "We must learn just where we stand. If he——"

"Oh, I can tell you where you stand," Polly interrupted confidently. "You don't need to put this fellow through the wringer."

"What do you mean?" asked Chester, ghastly white.

"I mean that you're in wrong, Dick, in dead wrong."

"But how do you know?"

"Oh, I've got eyes," said Polly. "There was a man sneaked into the boarding house just before I left it. I caught him nosing around on the second floor. He was Nick Carter, all right. I crept upstairs and watched him. He got a shoe from your room, Dick, and compared it with one of Thornton's. He searched your room, too, but paid no attention to Thornton's. You're the man he was after, or evidence against you, as sure as you hear what I'm saying."

"Gee! She's a tricky jade, for fair," thought Patsy. "She must have put one over on the chief."

Chester stood as if suddenly tongue-tied. His jaw had dropped, and he was trembling from head to foot.

Both Watson and Goff also appeared doubly alarmed by Polly's disclosures, though Goff turned quickly to Chester and said, pulling himself together:

"By thunder, Dick, if all she says is true, you certainly are in wrong, dead wrong."

"Not in deeper than you," snarled Chester, with his gray lips twitching convulsively. "You put me up to it, you two. You paid me for it, or agreed to pay me."

"Agreed be hanged!" cried Watson resentfully. "We didn't hire you to do a job of this kind. We agreed to pay you for stealing that secret formula. Couldn't you have stolen it without killing the old man? We didn't hire you for that—not by a long chalk!"

Chester looked like a man half choked for breath.

Before he could reply, however, Goff cried harshly:

"That's neither here nor there, Bill."

"What do you mean, Bart? We can't stand for murder and——"

"Shut up!" Goff snapped fiercely. "Dick is in the hole, and we've got to pull him out of it. That's no easy job, if Nick Carter is on the case. Tell me," he added sharply, turning abruptly to Chester, "did you get the secret formula?"

"Sure I got it," growled Chester, on the verge of a collapse. "But this crafty jade——"

"That's me," cut in Polly saucily. "Oh, I've got it, now, Mr. Goff, instead of Dick. It's safe in my clutches, and I'm going to get my price for it."

"Price?"

"I reckon I wouldn't want to force Dick to marry me, though, if he's wanted for croaking the old sawbones," said Polly. "I didn't dream he was in on that. That would be too tough for me, even, but I've got the formula all right, as you call it, and I'll not let go for nothing."

"You mean——"

"I mean that I'll turn it over to you for a good fat wad of the long green," interrupted Polly inelegantly—inelegance was her chief attribute. "That's where I stand now, if you must know."

"But where is it?" Goff demanded. "What have you done with it? We'll pay you any reasonable price for it, and Dick must then jump the country. What have you done with it?"

Polly hesitated.

"I reckon I'd better wait till I get the coin in my hands," she objected.

"Wait be hanged!" Goff forcibly protested. "There must be no waiting. Can't you see that this business must be settled here and now? We'll use you right. We'll pay what you want for the formula. What have you done with it? You shall have your price this very day. Where is the formula?"

Polly yielded.

"I sealed it in another envelope," she replied. "I addressed it to myself and dropped it in the mail, to be held until called for."

"In the local office?" Goff eagerly asked.

"Yes, sure," cried Polly, starting up. "I'll go and get it for you, and then——"

"Oh, no, you won't! We'll get it later, after taking you scamps in custody. I think, Chick, that we now know all we require."

The interruption came, as may be inferred, from Nick Carter.

Both detectives, each with a drawn revolver, suddenly strode through the front door of the bungalow and confronted the group of startled crooks.

A scream of dismay broke from Polly.

"Oh, my Lord!" she shrieked. "It's the same man. It's Nick Carter himself!"

"That's right," said Nick sharply. "You people are all under arrest, so take your medicine quietly."

Goff and Watson turned to the nearest chairs and sat down, pretending to be entirely unconcerned.

Not so, however, Dick Chester.

He caught sight of Patsy's revolvers, lying on the table where Goff had placed them.

In his mind's eye, too, he may have caught sight of a death chamber, an electric chair, the hideous leather straps, a group of pale and awe-eyed witnesses, waiting in solemn silence for the execution of—himself.

Be that as it may, he leaped to the table and seized one of the revolvers. Before a hand could stop him he had turned the barrel toward his heart, and the report of the weapon thundered through the room. It drowned the crash of his falling body—dead when it touched the floor.

* * * * * * *

There was nothing strange or supernatural in the sudden appearance of Nick Carter and Chick upon the scene at just that time.

Following Nick's instructions, Chick had shadowed Chester to his boarding house, where the latter had learned of the theft of the formula. Hastening then to the office of the Deacon Drug Company, where business had been suspended because of the fatality, Chester had telephoned for Goff and Watson to meet him at the bungalow, and also had the talk with Polly resulting in her going there. Upon leaving the office, however, Chester had jumped into the passing automobile of a friend and sped away so rapidly that Chick was unable to follow him.

Heading for the garage in which Danny was waiting with the touring car, however, Chick had met Nick just coming from the office of Goff & Watson, where he had learned where the two men had gone. Speeding out there with Chick, they had arrived just in time to see Patsy held up and taken into the bungalow. Stealing down to the side of the house, they overheard nearly all that was afterward said, and deferred the arrest only until they had learned where the secret formula could be found.

It was taken from the post office that very afternoon, and Nick turned it over with seals unbroken to Claudia Deacon, whom he visited just before evening in company with Frank Thornton, then discharged from custody. The gratitude of the couple for the services he had done them scarce knew bounds, and the happiness of both was clouded only by sorrowing thought of the still, cold form then lying under the same roof.

"It was a fatal formula for him," Nick said gravely, as he was pressing Claudia's hand when leaving. "Let me predict, however, that it will be something far better for his loving and loyal niece."

Nick's prediction came true, as none could reasonably doubt.

He was somewhat disappointed, however, in that no case was made against Goff & Watson, who could not be directly connected with the murder, and a clever criminal lawyer pulled them out of the fire, as well as Polly Leech.

Nick shook his head disapprovingly when he read of it in the newspapers.

"The notoriety will ruin them, nevertheless," he remarked to Chick and Patsy. "It will send them from bad to worse. Such men are to be feared. Take it from me, we have not heard the last of Hobart Goff and Bill Watson."

THE END.

The prediction of the great detective, that he and his assistants would hear more of the evildoing of Goff and Watson, came true, as you will find by reading the story that you will find in the next issue of this weekly, No. 116, out November 28th. The title of the story is: "The Blue Button; or, Nick Carter's Game Decoy." Do not miss it, for, if you do, you will fail to read a cracking good detective story.

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## GENERAL PUTNAM'S DUEL.

Every schoolboy is familiar with the story of "Putnam and the Wolf," but here is another story about the doughty revolutionary general which is not so well known.

Some four years before the War of Independence, Putnam offended a haughty regular officer—who looked upon the provincials with contempt—by asserting that the latter were as courageous as the former. The dispute ran high, and at length the scarlet-coated lieutenant asked scornfully:

"Dare you fight a duel with me?"

"Yes, at any moment," answered the provincial major.

"Then I challenge you," said the lieutenant; "choose your weapons."

"Two kegs of gunpowder—one for you and one for me—are the weapons I choose," said Putnam. "The time to-morrow morning at sunrise, the distance ten paces. The method, you to sit on one keg and I on the other, and a slow fuse attached to each to be lighted; and the one who sits longest shall be declared the winner."

The lieutenant was annoyed, but was compelled to accept the strange conditions. Putnam was to furnish the kegs of powder and the fuses, and at the appointed time the next morning they were at the designated places.

The combatants seated themselves, and the fire was applied to the fuses. As it went flashing along, the lieutenant became uneasy, and turned pale, while the major sat composed and smiling in the presence of threatened danger.

As the fire drew near the kegs, the lieutenant's courage failed him, and he arose and fled ,while his antagonist, unappalled, remained seated until the fuse was exhausted. The kegs were filled with onions! The lieutenant almost died of chagrin.

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# The Riddle and the Ring.

### By GORDON MacLAREN.

(This interesting story was commenced in No. 118 of NICK CARTER STORIES. Back numbers can always be obtained from your news dealer or the publishers.)

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE.

Barry slept late, and, having brought some order out of the chaos in his rooms, descended to breakfast with luxurious ease in the St. Albans restaurant. The subdued lights, the gleam of silver and glass and delicate white napery, the silent, swift-footed attention of his waiter, were all very pleasing to Lawrence, and combined to make last night's adventure seem more remote than ever, more the sort of accident which might happen to any one rather than a plot directed especially toward himself.

He spent little time considering it, for his mind was almost entirely taken up with thoughts of Miss Rives, and how it would be possible for him to serve her.

It would not be an easy matter; he realized that. The charming Southern girl was not the sort to accept favors from any one and every one. The utmost tact would have to be exercised in hitting upon just the right kind of thing, and Barry finished his leisurely breakfast without the shadow of an idea striking him. His only consolation was that the ten dollars he had given her would keep poverty at bay for two or three days at least.

"And before the end of that time I'll surely devise a way," he reflected, as he strolled out into the hotel lobby.

"A letter for you, Mr. Lawrence," the clerk said deferentially, as he passed the desk.

Barry took the missive with outward indifference, but with not a little inward curiosity. He stared at the unfamiliar hand, then tore open the flap hastily. The contents were brief, merely two lines of undistinguished writing without superscription or signature:

"For the week agreed upon, you will be good enough to lunch and dine entirely alone."

Barry frowned. Somehow, the communication brought bitterly to his mind a recollection of his self-imposed isolation. He was not likely to have company at luncheon or dinner. For months he had gone his way alone, shunning his old friends, avoiding their usual haunts, and crossing the street on the rare occasions in which he saw them approaching. After all this trouble to avoid cold snubs or equally abhorrent pity, he could not imagine himself inviting them now. The request was rather unnecessary.

As he strolled toward the door he looked the note over curiously. The writing was regular, almost to precision, and yet it had a certain pleasing individuality about it. The envelope was postmarked "Madison Square, 6 a. m." Evidently it had been taken up in the first collection. The little man in black was apparently still in town.

Reaching the street, Lawrence thrust the communication into his pocket, and turned toward the avenue. Beyond the purchase of a few small things he had forgotten the day before, he had nothing whatever to do before luncheon, and, strangely enough, the fact was not an unadulterated pleasure. Time was—and not so very long ago—when he would have looked upon this condition with unfeigned envy. To be well dressed and well fed, with money in his pockets and unlimited leisure at his command, had seemed a state beyond which there was little desire. He knew now how wrong he had been, and the unsigned note had driven home that knowledge. What good were his money and his leisure if there were no one to enjoy them with him?

"Of course, I'm not prohibited from seeing my friends outside of working hours," he muttered, with a whimsical sort of sadness. "But the trouble is I haven't any friends left to see."

From force of habit, he glanced up Forty-fourth Street toward the club as he passed; but he made no attempt to cross the avenue, and continued on his way downtown. The day was cloudless, and, though it was still bitter cold, the wind had died down to some degree, and made walking possible.

At Forty-second, Lawrence paused a moment or two, waiting for the stream of crosstown traffic to pass. He had just stepped from the curb when a hail from behind made his heart jump, and brought him to a standstill in the middle of the car track.

"Barry!" came in a familiar voice, raised in protest. "Oh, you Barry! Hold up!"

He turned swiftly, and the blood flamed into his face as he saw hurrying after him the great, almost hulking figure of Jock Hamersley, the famous Yale full back of two seasons ago.

The two fellows had chummed it at Groton. They had kept up their friendship to a certain degree ever since, in spite of the fact that they had different Alma Maters, and had more than once fought fiercely against each other on the gridiron. There was no one, perhaps, whom Lawrence would rather have seen just at this moment than big, lumbering, good-natured, soft-hearted Jock; yet his face flushed and grew tense, and his eyes held a touch of nervous fear as he waited for the other's first words.

Hamersley, his big mouth stretched in a wide grin, fairly flung himself at Barry, and gripped his hands with a force which made the bones crack.

"You blamed old quitter!" he roared. "Where have you been keeping yourself? Haven't got my lamps on you in months—nobody has! What do you mean by dropping all your friends as you have?"

The blood began to tingle in Barry's finger tips, and his eyes sparkled. The sound of that booming voice was sweeter in his ears than the most ravishing music. The sight of that great, muscular figure, clad in a loose, woolly coat of English frieze, was a pleasure greater than the most world-famous masterpiece of painting had ever produced. Of a sudden he was smitten with a doubt as to whether his course had been right or not. He stammered something vague about the trouble at the bank, but Hamersley promptly cut him short.

"Rot!" he bellowed. "Bosh! I'd punch your head, only I'm afraid of the concussion all that gas would make rushing out. What have you done with the sense the Lord gave you when you think the boys paid any attention to that stuff? You're more a fool than I thought you, and that's saying a lot."

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He had linked his arm through Barry's, and the two proceeded briskly down the avenue together.

Within three minutes Lawrence had a feeling that nothing had ever happened. After that first outburst, Jock slipped back into his old manner, quite as if they had parted only the night before. He asked no questions, even by inference, seeming content with what his companion volunteered; and by the time they paused before the building where the Yale man had offices, Lawrence felt as if he had come into his own again.

"You'll lunch with me, of course," the big fellow said.

Barry's face fell. "I'm beastly sorry, Jock," he returned slowly, "but I've an engagement. I'm booked for luncheon and dinner both."

"Humph! Well, drop in at the yacht club around five, and we'll have a good talk. Yes? Right! Don't forget, now."

He started into the building, but was back in an instant.

"Say," he exclaimed. "There's a dance at Sherry's to-night, and I've got an extra card. Don't start till eleven or so. How about it?"

Barry's mind was made up in a flash. That would give him time for dinner and a call on Miss Rives. His meeting with Hamersley had set stirring within him an intense desire to mingle with his kind, to be one of the passing show, instead of a mere onlooker, no matter how spectacular a part the latter was. He wanted to go to that dance. He would go.

"That hits me all right," he said; "nothing I'd like better."

As he walked on down the street the smile still lingered on his lips. He was thinking of what he had been twenty-four hours before. Already the pain and suffering and sordidness of that phase of his life seemed nebulous and unreal. At times he caught himself wondering if it had not been an amazingly vivid and horrible nightmare.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### FOLLOWED.

Having completed his purchases at several shops along the avenue, Lawrence finally emerged from the last one near Thirty-first Street, and paused on the sidewalk to consider how he should put in the time before lunch. It was not long after twelve, and he did not feel as if he could possibly lunch before half past one or two o'clock.

He glanced back at the dull-red façade of the Waldorf. He might go back there and take his place among the loungers in one of the corridors or smoking rooms, but he had an instinctive dislike for that sort of thing.

His eyes, ranging swiftly in the other direction, suddenly encountered the shifting glance of a man who stood looking into a window of the shop Barry had just come from; and at once Lawrence's mind, for some reason or another, reverted to the mysterious fellow with the beard.

There was no resemblance between the two. This one was young and tall, smooth-shaven, and very blond. His clothes, while inconspicuous, bore a certain foreign touch which Barry had learned to recognize in that year he had spent abroad, directly after leaving college, as secretary to Doctor Grenfell, wealthy scientist and Harvard lecturer.

Nevertheless, there was something in that hastily averted glance he had surprised which made Lawrence wonder whether the unknown stranger was anything more than an ordinary lounger, and decided him to put into operation a little test he had found extremely effective during his late unpleasant experience with Tappin's detectives.

Still swinging his stick gently back and forth, and humming a tune under his breath, he turned and began to survey the man critically. Slowly his gaze wandered from the narrow-brimmed, precisely dented felt hat, down the length of belted overcoat to the narrow, flat, rather clumsily shaped shoes. Then he reversed the process. And when his eyes came to rest upon the strong, rather rough-hewn profile presented to him, Barry was interested to observe that the stranger was fidgeting nervously, and that a dull red was slowly stealing upward from the high, close-fitting collar.

All this proved nothing, for any man was likely to be embarrassed by being stared at in such a pointed way. But when, as the scrutiny continued, the fellow finally turned from the window, and walked slowly on down the avenue, without so much as a glance at Barry, the latter felt that his suspicions were more than justified. An ordinary individual would have glared at him, or shown other signs of ill temper.

The affair was only beginning, however, and, as Lawrence moved leisurely toward Thirty-first Street, he decided that he would have no difficulty in being entertained until luncheon time.

Rounding the corner, he hurried toward Broadway for a hundred feet or so, then stopped abruptly to look into a shop window.

As he expected, the blond individual appeared almost instantly, crossed the street, and came briskly along on the opposite side.

From that moment the game progressed merrily for nearly an hour. Barry did not exert himself at first. He wanted to test the stranger's cleverness, so he confined himself to entering one door of a department store or hotel, and hastily departing by another; leaping on a surface car just as it was starting, only to alight as swiftly a few blocks farther on, and take one going in the opposite direction.

These, and half a dozen other tricks of a like nature, he tried, only to end up at Fourteenth Street and Sixth Avenue with the blond fellow sticking to him like a leech.

"He's no slouch," Barry reflected, as he turned slowly eastward. "I reckon I'll have to be a little spryer."

Turning uptown at Fifth Avenue, he kept a sharp lookout for a solitary taxi. When one finally came along behind him, he hailed it swiftly, ran out into the street, and leaped in almost before the car had come to a stop.

"Metropolitan Building—Madison Avenue entrance," he said quickly. "Hustle!"

The chauffeur did hustle, and Lawrence, glancing back through the little window, was pleased to see his pursuer swiftly lost in the crowd of noon-day pedestrians.

There was a short delay at the Flatiron Building, then the car sped up the west side of the square, on account of traffic regulations, east along Twenty-sixth, and thence into Madison. It was just as they rounded the last corner that Lawrence spied another flying taxi which seemed to be following them.

He had a bill ready, however, and, as the car slowed down, he leaped out, thrust it into the chauffeur's hand, and darted into the building.

The arcade was full of people moving in both directions, and Barry, hurrying through them, slipped suddenly into a little cigar store midway to Fourth Avenue, which had another entrance on Twenty-third Street. Less than a minute later he was diving into the subway entrance.

Fortunately a local was just drawing into the station, and, as he took his seat, he chuckled a little to himself.

"You'll have some trouble in following that trail, my friend," he murmured.

He got out at Fourteenth Street, and took an uptown train, but long before reaching Fifty-ninth Street the smile had vanished, and a puzzled frown furrowed his forehead.

There seemed no doubt now that his encounter with the bearded man last night had not been the result of chance. He was being followed deliberately, and there were at least two men who seemed tremendously interested in every move he made. What was their object? What motive governed this inexplicable pursuit?

Try as he would, Barry could find no answer to the questions. If they had been attracted by the emerald ring, and were following him for the purpose of robbery—and last night's experience certainly pointed strongly toward that solution—what earthly sense was there in the actions of the blond stranger? Did he expect to sandbag and rob a victim in broad daylight, amid the crowds which swarmed the city streets? It was absurd, Barry told himself, yet what else was there to think?

The problem occupied him on his way over to the Plaza, and made him somewhat absent during the progress of the simple luncheon he ordered. He did not, in fact, really pay much attention to his surroundings until an odd event effectually brought him to himself.

He had arisen from his table, and was making his way slowly to the door, his progress somewhat impeded by the simultaneous departure of a large luncheon party. As he trailed along behind the laughing crowd of girls, he happened to glance casually to the left, and encountered the gaze of a woman sitting at a table near the wall.

She was not young, but there was a stately distinction in her looks and manner which impressed Lawrence. Her face was a perfect oval, showing remnants of great beauty, and Barry had a vague impression that he had seen her before. She was perfectly gowned, and wore no jewels, save a single strand of wonderful pearls. Her companions were much younger, and wholly charming. The head waiter hovered obsequiously about the table.

As their eyes met, Barry saw her start slightly and stare for a second, a look of puzzled astonishment on her face. The next instant she smiled and bowed in a manner which was even more than cordial.

Automatically Lawrence returned the bow with what grace he could assume, and passed on. At the door he turned for a backward glance, and was surprised to see that the lady had moved a little in her chair, and was following him with her eyes.

"I suppose I've met her somewhere," he thought, pausing in the doorway. "I wish I could remember her name. She's certainly somebody."

An instant later he caught the eye of the head waiter, and summoned him with a slight gesture.

"Who is the lady at the fourth table from the door?" he asked briefly. "I seem to have forgotten her name."

The haughty functionary followed the direction of Barry's glance, and then turned back, an odd expression in his eyes.

"That is Mrs. Winslow Courtney, sir," he answered stiffly.

For a second Lawrence was almost fazed. Then, with a short nod, he passed on into the corridor.

Mrs. Winslow Courtney! No wonder he could not recall meeting her before. He doubted whether he had ever seen her, save, perhaps, in her box at the opera; for it was she, more than any other woman, who ruled New York society. With family, vast wealth, and a charming personality, she had taken her place in that innermost circle around which the social life of the entire country revolved. One of her daughters was the wife of Prince von Lauenberg, the wealthiest nobleman in Prussia; another was the Duchess of Wilton.

Decidedly Barry had no right to that charming smile from Mrs. Winslow Courtney.

"I suppose she took me for some one else," he murmured, as he left the Plaza. "I wouldn't mind knowing her, though. Her friends, her acquaintances, have to be somebody."

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE GIRL WHO VANISHED.

Having grown a little weary of dodging people, Lawrence decided not to give those who seemed so interested in his movements a chance to pick up his trail again that afternoon. He was fond of motoring, so he proceeded at once to hire a good car, and, with only a chauffeur for company, went spinning out over the snowy, level roads of Westchester County.

In spite of the cold, he enjoyed it so much that it was nearly a quarter past five before he entered the yacht club, and sent up his name to Hamersley.

The latter descended at once, and, when he had finished upbraiding Barry, they went up to the famous model room, and, settling down in a corner with cigars, chatted and joked each other for over an hour.

Two or three times Lawrence was on the point of asking his friend whether he had an opening for a good stenographer in his office, but each time he could not seem to bring himself to make the inquiry. And so they parted without Miss Rives and her very pressing necessities being mentioned.

"I'll talk it over with her to-night, and ask her if she won't let me find her a position," Barry decided, as he walked around to the hotel.

Having dressed with unusual care, he took a taxi to the Waldorf and dined there again in solitary state.

Though he kept his eyes open throughout the meal, he saw nothing of the blond fellow he had outwitted that morning, or of the bearded man. There was apparently no one in the dining room or about the hotel corridors who paid any more attention to him than would be accorded to any handsome, well-dressed, prosperous-looking chap.

Instead of being relieved at this, Barry was affected in quite the opposite manner. The sudden cessation of interest struck him as being decidedly unnatural, and made him wonder whether it was not a bluff to hide the real intentions of the unknown spies.

After he had dined, he had a taxi summoned, and not until it was at the door did he leave the lighted corridor for the street.

Giving the Forty-eighth Street address, he stepped in and took up a position that would enable him easily to glance through the back window every now and then, and see whether he was being followed.

Until they turned out of Longacre Square it was impossible to tell this with any certainty. The streets were full of taxis and motor cars, carrying people to theaters or the opera or coming away empty. But, having turned into the comparatively deserted cross street, Barry kept an extra sharp lookout. Before the taxi reached Eighth Avenue he was rewarded by seeing another car skid around from Broadway in their wake.

With a slight frown of annoyance, he wondered how they had managed it. It is always more or less trying to miss a trick of any sort, and Lawrence rather prided himself on his keenness of observation.

The slowing down of his car as they approached the house made him thrust the matter from his mind in favor of more agreeable things. After all, his pursuer could accomplish nothing here.

Stepping out on the sidewalk, Barry told the chauffeur to wait, and ran up the steps. After a prolonged wait, a rather untidy-looking maid answered his ring, holding the door only partially open, and peering doubtfully through the crack.

"Is Miss Rives at home?" Lawrence inquired.

The girl stared. "Miss—who did you say?"

"Miss Rives—Miss Shirley Rives!" Barry's tone was slightly impatient. Out of the corner of his eye he saw that the second taxi had crawled past, and come to a stop a few doors beyond. "She arrived last night, I believe."

The maid sniffed. "It's news to me," she remarked pertly. "Mebbe you've got the wrong house. There ain't no Miss Rives, nor anybody like it, stopping here just now."

Lawrence's eyes flashed, but he restrained his anger with an effort. He had never seen quite such a stupid creature in his life.

"I have made no mistake in the house," he retorted abruptly. "Kindly ask your mistress to see me for a moment."

"She ain't in." The girl's tone was plainly triumphant. Evidently she sensed the irritation in Barry's voice, and was glad of a chance to retaliate.

For an instant Lawrence was stumped. It was intolerable that he should be cheated out of something he had been looking forward to all day, by the stupidity of a saucy maid. Whether it was anything more than stupidity he did not know, but he was determined not to give in yet.

"Then take my card to Miss Sally, the young lady who has your top floor front," he said tersely, slipping one hand into his pocket, and drawing forth a cardcase.

The maid hesitated, frowning. For an instant it seemed as if she meant to close the door in his face, and Barry was all ready to thrust a foot into the crack. Then something in his determined expression must have decided her, for she grudgingly stood aside for him to enter.

Taking out a gold pencil, Lawrence hastily scrawled a few words on his card, and handed it to her in silence.

The girl took it and glanced insolently at the hatrack. Finding that there was nothing there or anywhere else in the hall of an easily portable nature, she tossed her head and flounced to the stairs.

It seemed an eternity to the impatient Lawrence before a door closed hastily above, and he heard the sound of light footsteps hurrying down from the top floor. Presently a girl came in sight on the stairs, a rather nice-looking girl, with trim black hair and fresh coloring. As she saw Barry, she slackened her pace, and made the last few steps very slowly, indeed, pausing at the foot with one hand still resting on the balustrade.

"I'm very sorry, indeed, to have troubled you," Lawrence said, with a pleasant smile, "but I came to see Miss Rives, and the girl insists she isn't here."

The blank stare of amazement she gave him struck Barry with a chill sense of foreboding.

"Miss Rives!" the girl repeated slowly. "You can't be talking about Shirley Rives?"

"That's just who I mean. She came here last night. She had—er—left her boarding place rather suddenly, and when I—met her downtown she was on her way to see you."

For a second the girl looked keenly into his eyes, without speaking. Then she gave her head an odd shake.

"You don't look like a person who is joking," she said quietly, "so I s'pose you've made a mistake some way. I haven't seen Shirley Rives in two months, or more."

Barry's jaw dropped, and some of the ruddy glow left his cheeks. The thing was impossible. He had left Shirley on this very doorstep not twenty-four hours before—had even seen her enter the house on her way to this friend's room. And now they had the audacity to tell him that she had never been here. There was something queer about the whole matter, and he meant to find out what it was before he left the place.

"I haven't made a mistake," he said sternly. "I brought Miss Rives to this door myself a little before eleven last night. She looked up at your window, and when she saw it lighted she said it was all right; that Sally must still be here, because she used to read till all hours. She rang the bell, and I waited till the door opened and she went inside. And now you want me to believe that you never——"

He broke off abruptly, startled at the look on the girl's face. She had grown pale, and her eyes were dilated until they looked like holes burned in a white sheet. Her hands—slender, well-kept hands they were—were clenched tightly, and as Barry stopped she flung them up with an odd, eloquent gesture.

"It's the truth!" she gasped, in a frightened voice. "I haven't seen her—I swear it!" Her lips were trembling, and she caught them swiftly between her teeth. "Something's happened to her—it must have! Was she down in her luck? Had she lost her job?"

Barry nodded miserably. He was dazed—bewildered. But overtopping every other sensation was cold, deadly fear; fear for another one cares for, which is infinitely more gripping and powerful than an emotion involving self alone.

"Yes," he stammered. "She'd lost her job. She'd been turned out of her room—turned into the street last night. Do you know what that might have meant if I hadn't found her?"

The swift, horrified intake of her breath told him that she knew only too well. For a second she stood absolutely still, her mouth working. Then suddenly she put up both hands swiftly to her face, and began to sob. Almost as swiftly, she snatched them away again, and stared at him out of eyes filled with tears.

"What's come to her?" she demanded fiercely. "Why'd she leave this house without seeing me? What made her go, and where's she gone? Tell me that! She didn't vanish into air, did she? Where's she gone, and—where—is she—now?"

Lawrence did not answer her now. For some seconds that same question had been pounding through his brain with the dull, rhythmical iteration of a hammer on an anvil.

Where was she now?

## CHAPTER XVI.

### ANOTHER WOMAN.

As Barry departed a little later he was conscious of a maddening sensation of helplessness. There seemed no question in his mind that Shirley Rives had left the house of her own accord. The fact that she had made not the slightest attempt to see her friend, Sally Barton, proved that conclusively. It was possible, of course, that the head of the establishment, a Mrs. Weston, could throw some light upon the mystery; but she had gone over to Long Island, and was not expected back until the following morning.

Barry's first impulse had been to go at once to the station house, make inquiries there, and possibly send out a general alarm; but he realized almost at once that such a step would be unwise. Miss Rives had given him no right to interfere in her affairs. She was a perfectly free agent to come and go as she liked, and where she chose; but the fact that she had disappeared in this utterly inexplicable manner drove Lawrence distracted.

Wild thoughts of suicide, under the burden of her troubles, flashed through his mind. Girls, even of her high mental caliber, had been driven to such desperate acts. Mrs. Weston's reception of her might have been the last straw to an already staggering load, and driven her impulsively forth into the street again. Worse yet, it might not have been Mrs. Weston at all who opened the door. There was quite as good a chance of its being some lodger on his way out. And Sally Barton's estimate of some of the lodgers was far from reassuring.

The maid had been summoned again, and interrogated sharply by the girl, but to no purpose. She had gone to bed about half past nine, leaving her mistress making up accounts in the back room. She knew nothing further, had heard nothing out of the way; and in the morning there had not been the slightest sign of any stranger having been in the house.

And there Lawrence was obliged to leave the matter. Think as he would, he could hit upon nothing else he might do. The stenographer promised to telephone him the instant she learned anything from Mrs. Weston; but Barry had already determined to call at the house directly after breakfast next morning. How he was going to remain in suspense for even that length of time he did not understand.

It was barely nine as he left the house, and for a moment or two he hesitated on the curb, wondering where he should go. Then a whimsical, absurd notion came to him, and, having ordered the chauffeur to drive to the northwest corner of Madison Square, he stepped into the taxi.

There was not the slightest hope in his mind of thus finding any clew. The vagaries of chance were strange and improbable enough, to be sure, but they could scarcely be expected to bring about such an utterly wild coincidence as that. He simply had a feeling that he wanted to return to that spot where he had first met her, and anything in the way of action was better than moping alone in his rooms.

As the car jerked forward and sped across town, Barry paid little attention to the second taxi, except to notice that it was following about half a block behind. At the corner of the square he got out, told the chauffeur to wait, and walked slowly down the winding walk.

As before, the place was deserted. The great, glittering tower still loomed high above the branches of the gaunt trees. The fountain had that same look of dreariness and desolation. The cold was as bitter; but the wind had died away, and everything was still.

As he rounded the ice-rimmed basin, Barry's heart leaped into his throat. Entering the square, just as *she* had entered it last night, was a slight, slim figure, who came toward him hurriedly, yet with that same odd sense of hesitation in her movements. As they approached each other Lawrence's heart was thudding so loudly that he fancied he could hear the beats. It was impossible—utterly impossible; and yet he hoped.

She came on hurriedly, and his pace slackened the barest trifle as he tried to penetrate the shadow beneath the black hat brim. Then he saw that it was not Shirley Rives. It was a girl, pinched and worn with fatigue and hunger.

Half a dozen steps he took blindly, fairly sick with disappointment, before he stopped abruptly and turned around. The girl was hurrying on; she had almost reached the fountain.

"Stop!" Barry cried impulsively. "Wait a minute."

Instinctively she obeyed, twisting her head backward to watch his coming; and the thin, white wedge of face, ghastly in the pitiless electric light streaming down upon it, smote Lawrence with a new pang. By the time he reached her he held a thin leather case with gold corners in his hand.

"Here!" he said harshly, yet with a certain throbbing undercurrent of pity in his voice. "Take this and get something to eat. Do you understand?"

She stared at the bill he held out, then her fingers closed over it convulsively.

"Thanks," she said hoarsely. She stood for a second or two, gazing into his face. Then she shivered. "Thanks," she repeated, and this time it seemed as if a whole world of despair and misery was in that little word.

Barry made no answer. There was nothing more to say, and he knew it. Still he lingered for a second before he uttered a brief good night, and turned toward his waiting taxi.

It was the old, old tragedy, but somehow the strange coincidence of time and place filled Lawrence with an awful, unreasoning dread, and made his ride back to the hotel a torture.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### BEYOND BELIEF.

At first Barry was tempted to phone Hamersley, and tell him he could not come to the dance. He had never felt less like such a thing in his life, but, as he slowly approached the instrument, trying to think up a plausible excuse, he realized that anything would be better in his present state of mind than sitting alone in his room.

So he ordered a taxi to be ready for him at ten. When that time came he descended, and was driven to the Hamersley house, just off upper Fifth Avenue. He saw that the other car was still trailing him persistently, but somehow he did not care. That seemed no longer a very important matter.

There was a considerable delay in getting started, for Jock's mother and sister were going along, and, as the big chap expressed it: "To be ready in time for a dance, a woman ought to start dressing when she gets up in the morning."

They came down at length, however, and, after a little conversation, all four got into the limousine, which had been waiting nearly an hour, and were soon bowling down Fifth Avenue.

It was after eleven when they entered the great ballroom at Sherry's, and the dance was apparently in full swing. The glittering lights, the flowers, the wonderful, intoxicating music, the gleam of jewels and bright eyes, could not but arouse Barry from his abstraction and make him glad that he had come.

Large as the room was, it seemed crowded with dancers, while about the walls and in the anterooms sat patronesses, chaperons, and other nonparticipants, watching the brilliant scene, chatting among themselves, or here and there indulging in a rubber of the inevitable bridge.

"It's very mixed, of course," Miss Hamersley was saying, as they glided over the perfect floor. "That's always the way with a big affair like this. If there's any one you want to meet just make Jock introduce you. He knows everybody. Yes, surely, Peter. Thanks, very much, Mr. Lawrence."

Before the latter could collect his wits, she was whirled away on the arm of the young fellow who had cut in; and Barry backed up against the wall, diverted by the kaleidoscopic scene, his eyes roving about the room in search of possible acquaintances.

For a time he saw no one he knew. There were plenty of charming faces, beauties of every type, and not a few of whom glanced curiously in his direction. There were many girls whom he would have liked immensely to meet twenty-four hours before; but, somehow, now that he had seen Shirley Rives, he ceased to be enthusiastic over others.

The thought of her, leaping back into his mind after a brief distraction, brought a faint pucker into Barry's forehead. Presently, still thoughtful, he moved slowly from his place, drifting toward the end of the room where the line of ladies stood to receive the belated guests who still dribbled in at intervals.

Presently his eyes fell upon a group at some distance from him, and he gave a great start. The group consisted of a girl surrounded by five or six men. Her back was squarely toward Lawrence, but there was something about her slim, graceful figure, tiny but exquisitely proportioned, and the tilt of her head, with its wonderful crown of coppery hair, which was so like Shirley Rives that it almost hurt.

She wore a close-fitting gown of shimmering golden tissue, in which sequins gleamed and winked with every movement. A gorgeous string of pearls was wound twice about her neck. On her arms were several costly bracelets.

Apparently she had only just arrived. It would seem, also, that she was having some difficulty in choosing a partner from the number of men hovering about her. Barry, watching her with unconscious curiosity, could see her laugh and shake her head several times. Once, when a youth stepped forward with lifted arms, as if the matter were settled, she slipped away from him, holding up the big spray of orchids she carried with a gesture of admonition.

At length, with a sudden display of dignity, she lifted her head, and nodded to a tall, handsome fellow who stood, apparently unmoved, on the outer edge of the circle.

As he came swiftly forward, the others fell back with shrugs and disappointed looks. The girl caught up her skirts, and placed one tiny hand upon her partner's shoulder; and Lawrence, who had been watching the little comedy with more interest than he realized, decided that in a moment she would turn, and he would see her face.

An instant later she did turn—full upon him; and Barry's heart almost ceased to beat. In that brief second, before she was whirled away into the crowd, he saw the wonderful brown eyes, the tender, shapely mouth, the graceful curve of cheek and chin which had so fascinated him the night before, and which had scarcely left his mind for a moment since.

The girl was Shirley Rives!

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### CHAOS.

Never in all his life had Barry Lawrence been so staggered. For a moment or two he refused to believe the evidence of his senses. The age of miracles was passed, and it was nothing less than a miracle to see this girl, who had been penniless, friendless, desperate the night before, now clad in silks, glittering with jewels, and apparently absolutely at home amid these luxurious surroundings.

It was more than absurd; it was utterly impossible. He had been deceived by some chance resemblance, coupled with the fact that her face remained so vividly and constantly in his mind, into fancying for a second that this stranger was Shirley Rives.

Recovering his composure with an effort, Barry moved swiftly along the wall until he reached a nook banked with palms and ferns. Slipping through them, he let the trailing green curtain fall into place behind him. Then he waited, his eyes fixed upon the gliding throng, for the girl to reappear. He meant to satisfy himself that he had made no mistake.

Subtle, seductive, almost intoxicating in its rhythmic sweetness, the wonderful waltz music, while it fell upon unheeding ears, seemed, nevertheless, to stir his being with vague unrest. Couples flashed swiftly by his corner or glided past more slowly. Some were the epitome of graceful motion; others romped about the hall in modifications of the uncouth turkey trot and other dances of the same sort which had, of late, been attracting so much unfavorable comment. There were tall girls and short, beautiful and plain; but Barry's eyes passed over their faces with the utmost indifference. Not one of them was the girl he sought.

Suddenly his heart began to thud, and his figure stiffened as he bent forward and parted the leaves a little more. She was coming toward him down the polished floor, moving with that inimitable grace which seems born in most Southern girls.

There was a gleam of jewels on her corsage and in her hair. The diamond buckles on her absurdly tiny satin slippers winked and sparkled as her feet kept perfect time with the music. The swish of her gown sounded clearly to the strained senses of the man behind the palms.

Just as the couple glided so close that he could almost have touched them, the girl looked up into her partner's face, and laughed, a low, soft, bewitching laugh, which sent the blood boiling into Barry's face, and brought his teeth together on his under lip.

He had not made any mistake. She was Shirley Rives beyond any question or doubt. She was the girl whom he had found half frozen, perishing from cold and hunger, without a roof to cover her—without a single friend, apparently, in that whole vast city, save a stenographer in a cheap West Side lodging house.

The look in her eyes, the curve of her half-smiling lips as she glanced up into the face of her tall partner, the very sound of her laugh, drove Lawrence almost mad. He hated the fellow with every atom of hatred in his being; hated his graceful dancing, his polished manner, his air of proprietorship; detested, above all, his dark, handsome face with its expression of captivating melancholy. It was only a pose, he told himself bitterly, to gain attention and sympathy.

But swiftly that feeling was displaced in the realization that his idol had been shattered. The girl had deliberately deceived him from the very first. She had never been friendless and homeless and desperate at all. As to what reason she could have had for playing with him as she did he had not the remotest conception, but the bitter, intolerable, fact remained that she had made a fool of him.

How she must have laughed to herself when he fell into the trap, like a great booby! How entertained she must have been in the restaurant, and later, when he practically forced the money upon her. No doubt it had been a merry play to her, over which she would probably laugh herself weary whenever it came back into her mind. Very likely she had already amused her friends by telling them of her little adventure, and what an easy mark she had found.

Barry shivered at the thought. Then he laughed mirthlessly. The trouble with him was that he had taken the jest with deadly seriousness. It was up to him to think of some way to play up to her. She must never know how much the thing had hurt him. He must make her think that he, too, had been playing a part all the time, instead of being the goat.

Unfortunately such a thing was much more easily thought of than put into execution. Barry was sore and hurt beyond measure, and not at all in condition for playing a game of that sort. The lights and music, the laughter and gayety, suddenly palled. He felt as if he wanted to get away from it all, yet he did not want to go as long as she was here.

The result was that he kept his place behind the palms for fifteen or twenty minutes, during which Miss Rives circled past him time after time. The handsome, melancholy youth had disappeared, and given place to a tawny-haired giant with a strong, pleasant face and infectious laugh which Lawrence disliked unreasoningly. Then followed a slim, graceful chap with a delicately penciled mustache, who showed an inclination for the most sensational dances, and was evidently restrained only by his partner's preference for the more sedate Boston.

To one and all of them Shirley Rives seemed equally pleasant and equally fascinating. Instead of relieving Lawrence, as this should have done, it simply aggravated him the more; and presently, unable longer to contain himself, he left his corner, and made his way straight to the retirement of the smoking room.

He had scarcely entered it, and was taking out his cigarette case, when a tall, smooth-shaven fellow, very ruddy and very blond, sprang from a chair in which he had been lounging, and, rushing forward, gripped Barry's hand.

"By Jove, Oscar, old chap!" he exclaimed heartily. "Why, this is ripping, don't you know! To think of seeing you in this bally place!"

Lawrence frowned, and withdrew his hand as soon as the other's fingers relaxed their pressure. He was in no mood for talking to strangers, even if they did labor under an innocent case of mistaken identity.

"I think you must have made a mistake," he returned coldly. "I don't remember ever having seen you before."

The Englishman's face took on an expression of incredulous astonishment, and he fumbled for the monocle depending from his neck by a broad black ribbon.

"But, I say!" he objected, in a plaintive tone. He had screwed the glass into his left eye, and was regarding Barry inquiringly. "You don't mean you've really forgotten the ripping times we had at Cambridge? You're just chaffing, old chap! You couldn't forget the bloomin' rackets we used to pull off in your rooms—eh, what?"

"I really have," Barry retorted shortly. "You are evidently taking me for some one else."

The other's jaw dropped, but the monocle remained firmly in its place.

"Fancy, now!" he gasped helplessly. "Extraordinary lapse of memory!" He shrugged his shoulders, and went on, with heavy sarcasm: "I dare say, then, you don't even remember Cambridge?"

"I remember Cambridge perfectly," Lawrence retorted sharply, goaded beyond endurance; "but I have no recollection of you whatever."

Turning on his heel, he flung away his unlighted cigarette, and left the room without giving the other a chance to speak.

TO BE CONTINUED.

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## ANOTHER MYSTERY.

Father—"Who was that young lady ~~sitting~~ by you at the baseball game?"

Boy—"That was my school-teacher."

"Oh! I noticed that you and several ~~other boys~~ were continually talking to her."

"Yes. We was trying to make her understand how the game is played, but she couldn't. I don't see how she ever got to be a school-teacher."

# THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

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### Now They're Moving it to South America.

It is rumored that Tex Ricard, who promoted the Johnson-Jeffries fight, is back of the scheme to get Johnson and Jess Willard together in a championship contest. Ricard is in South America, and his acquaintances believe that the meeting of Johnson and Willard will probably take place there.

Nothing has been heard of Johnson's plans. At last reports he was headed for Russia, to appear in exhibitions. But business cannot be good in Russia now. There would, of course, be no chance to pull off the big fight in Europe, and with Johnson barred everywhere in the United States, the South American plan looks rather reasonable.

The syndicate which is back of the proposed fight has agreed to locate the battleground and to pay Johnson $30,000, win, lose, or draw, that being the amount which the negro has named as his portion for defending the championship. Right now the whole thing is only on paper. The best-laid plans of promoters very often go wrong.

### Famous Indian Dies, Age 108.

The death of George Clafwha, or "Old George," as he was known to hundreds of pioneers of the Puget Sound country, is reported at Seattle, Wash., from Suquamish. His friends say that he was 108 years old

Clafwha was a famous character among the Indians at Suquamish, being a nephew of Chief Seattle. He was the last of the original tribe which dwelt at Port Madison before it was made a reservation.

Clafwha was roaming over the Puget Sound country hunting and fishing many years before the first white settler built his cabin on the present site of Seattle.

### Rich Heiress Sticks to Job.

Left the bulk of a fortune of $200,000, Miss Flora B. Holt, a stenographer, of Milwaukee, Wis., has decided to keep the happiness which she sought in a business career, by continuing her work, as head of the stenographers employed by a local company.

While glancing at a newspaper the other day she discovered she had become an heiress.

"After providing bequests of $42,000 for friends and relatives, Miss Vilna McDonald, who died in Escanaba, Mich., leaves the residue of her estate of $200,000 to her cousin, Miss Flora B. Holt, of Milwaukee," read the story.

"I'm going to keep my job," declared Miss Holt, "and I'm going to be just as happy as I ever was before."

### No Heavy Armor for Football Warriors.

Ten years ago very few football players would enter a game unless protected by a complete set of armor. There were shin guards, nose guards, head guards, hand bandages, and pads, which served to give many players the appearance of burlesque strong men.

On a college team to-day one seldom sees shin guards, and the nose guard has been discarded. A few players wear head guards, but the average collegian seems to think that the donning of armor signals a lack of courage. Light padding is worn by some on the elbows and shoulders, while the heavily padded moleskin pants have been replaced by a lighter canvas, in which only light padding is noticeable on the knees and hips.

Of course, the coaches and trainers must protect the players, and in cases where a valuable man is carrying a bad shin, a broken nose, or a head injury, armor is forced upon him. However, taking the football season through and through, the absence of pads and armor is noticeable, and yet it is claimed the list of injuries grows smaller each season.

Yale and Harvard athletes use little padding, even in practice, and the annual hospital list is comparatively small. Chicago, Minnesota, Northwestern, Iowa, Illinois, and other teams have slowly but surely discarded the regalia, until now, outside of the absence of caps, a football team looks much the same as a club of baseball players.

### Packers Reap Harvest from the War, Says Erb.

Newman Erb, president of the Ann Arbor Railroad Company, has just returned to New York from an inspection trip over that system and also from a conference with banking and business associates in Chicago. Mr. Erb said:

"I found conditions in Michigan very satisfactory. Nearly every crop is up to normal, and in some instances considerably above. While the sugar-beet acreage is not as large as in recent years, the yield and quality of the beets are excellent. In Chicago I found sentiment more depressed and more actual depression in business. Chicago, more than any other city in the West, reflects conditions in New York.

"One of the brightest features that I have observed in the business situation in Chicago was the packing industry. The shipments of packing-house products to Europe are large. I understand that since the war started one concern has shipped $3,500,000 worth of its products to France alone.

"It is probable that the Minneapolis & St. Louis will be in the market soon for from fifteen to twenty locomotives."

### Upset in Air He Drops to Death.

While making a practice flight in a gusty wind at Hempstead Plains recently, William Piceller, an aviator, fell 200 feet and received injuries from which he died in the Nassau Hospital.

Piceller was flying a biplane and seemed to have trouble almost from the time he left the ground.

As he was negotiating a turn, the machine capsized, and, although Piceller was an experienced flyer, the altitude was not sufficient for him to regain control before the machine struck the ground. He was flung clear of the machine in the fall.

The victim of the accident had been pursued by ill luck ever since he took up aviation. He learned to fly a Wright biplane at Nassau Boulevard in 1912, under the instruction of George W. Beatty, and had no difficulty in obtaining his license. Following that, he made many attempts to interest men of means in exhibition enterprises, but with little success. He did some work for the Gyro Motor Company in Washington, but his engagement at the Hempstead Field with the Peter Angelo Aviation Company was the first place that held out any promise.

Piceller was of a happy-go-lucky disposition and was considered a good deal of a dare-devil. He would fly in any wind, when he could get a machine, and many times expressed contempt for other, more careful flyers. He was thirty years old and leaves a wife and child. His home was at 435 East 23d Street, Manhattan.

### Same Bullet Hits Two.

Three persons were shot, two with the same bullet, by careless hunters recently in New York State. Alfred J. Brewer, of Cold Spring, being wounded the worst. He was shot in the abdomen in Webatuck by his cousin, John F. McLeod, of that village, with whom he was hunting.

Thomas R. Jackson, of Tompkins Cove, was slightly wounded in the right leg, near Highland Falls. The same bullet lodged in Mrs. Wilbur M. Atkinson's left leg. The bullet was fired by a hunter, who had evidently failed to see them through the brush.

### Directum I. Makes New Record.

Directum I., the New York pacer, managed by Doctor J. C. McCoy, of Kirkwood, Del., and driven by Ray Snedeker recently over the Columbus, Ohio, track, gave to William the first defeat that this Indiana four-year-old has ever taken in a racing career of two seasons.

To do so the chestnut stallion was forced to pace the first mile in 1:58 and the second in 2:00. The time of the first heat is the fastest ever made in competition, and the race stands as a world's record. Before to-day each horse had won a second heat in 2:00. The former record for one heat was 1:59¼, made recently at Detroit by Frank Bogash, junior.

It was over a hard track, the sort desired by Directum I.'s handlers, that the race was run. William, in the betting, sold favorite at $100 to $50. After the first heat the odds shifted to 2 to 1 on Directum I.

A seventeen-mile wind was blowing when the first heat started, but its velocity was much reduced when the last was called. The horses had to race against it on the back stretch.

Directum I. drew the pole and the pair got away on the first attempt. William went rushing and took the lead forty yards from the starting mark. Two lengths ahead, he reached the first quarter in 29 seconds. and went on to the half in 59¼. He was leading comfortably when the three-quarter post was made in 1:30.

At the last turn, Directum I. was stirred up and the two pacers were on even terms when half the home stretch had been traversed. An instant later Driver Marvin slapped William with his whip, but his pacer did not respond well enough to ward off the rush of Directum I., who finished strong, with his rival a full length behind. The last quarter was paced in 28 seconds. Separate timing had William's mile in 1:58¼.

At the start of the second heat, William was rated slower and was kept beside Directum I. until the first quarter had been passed. Then he stepped out and took the pole, his opponent dropping back a couple of lengths. The first quarter was done in 30½ seconds and the half in 1:01¾.

On the far turn sprinting started. Directum I. steadily cut down William's lead, though the latter was ahead at the three-quarters in 1:32. There was a terrific brush through the stretch, the final quarter being paced in 28 seconds, with Directum I. holding a neck lead.

### No "Soft Snap" for Armour Boy at Work.

Philip D. Armour, 3d, smiled discreetly one day recently in Chicago while his uncle, J. Ogden Armour, told a group of newspaper men just how hard the young heir to millions will have to work at the stockyards.

"No loafing, no getting down late, no quitting early for him," exclaimed uncle. "He is going through the mill just like any one else around here, and if he expects any favors he's mighty mistaken. He's just like any other boy, and he has to work, and work hard, mind you."

"I'm all primed for him," added James Brown, the head buyer, to whom young Armour reported for work this morning. "I have instructions to treat him just as I do anybody else, and I'm going to do it."

"I haven't got into my riding togs or pulled on my big rubber boots yet," Philip laughed. "That comes to-morrow, when I make my official début as a buyer of cattle. To-day I'm just going around getting acquainted with the heads of the departments. Like it? Why, of course I like it. I'm out here to do just what the other fellows do, and take my knocks with the rest of them. It's a man's work, and I'm not afraid of it."

"Aw, he won't buy cattle any more than a baby will," said a veteran in an aside. "He'll be toted around by Brown and jollied and pampered and spoiled. I'm not for him at all."

"Why, you old grouch, you don't know what you're talking about," flung in a mounted buyer. "He's no college Willie, but a real man. Why"—and he paused for just the right expression—"why, he's just like the rest of us."

### Canadian Loses Five Sons in War.

Too old to go to war himself, Staff Sergeant James Lindsay, of Hamilton, Canada, who has been recruiting for the Seventy-seventh Wentworth Regiment, received the shocking news recently that five of his sons had been killed in the battle of Mons, and that another one had been wounded in the same battle.

Lindsay comes of a fighting family. He has seen active service all over the world, has been in many battles, and carries several scars of battles.

His sons followed their father in serving their king and country, and thus six of them were found at the front when the war broke out. They were all members of the same regiment, the Northumberland Fusiliers. Those killed were:

James, sergeant major; John, Hugh, and Henry, color sergeants, and Thomas, sergeant.

### Cow Ascends into Barn Loft.

Hamilton Wells, of Benville, Ark., is out five dollars in cash besides his own labor, in getting his cow down from the loft of his barn. The cow had walked up the stairs during the night and next morning, when he discovered her, he considered it quite a stunt on the cow's part, but thought she could come down as easy as she had gone up. But in that he was badly mistaken. The cow could not get her feet down to the first step. He had to hire help and bring her down with a block and tackle. Hereafter he will keep the doors of his barn close

### Tags Identify Slain Soldiers.

Each German soldier wears, on a string or ribbon about his neck, a small metal tag, bearing his number and the number of his regiment. After the battles, when the Germans find their dead, the tags are removed and sent to headquarters for identification. There the books are opened and the name and number of the dead soldier are recorded, with the place where he fell. The collections of tags are reverently guarded until they reach home.

### Little Machine is Eavesdropper.

Over thirty years ago Thomas Edison, the inventor, said that some day the phonograph would perfect the telephone. His prophecy is partly realized in his latest invention, called the telescribe.

The telescribe is a simple little instrument. An ordinary desk telephone is equipped with two transmitters and two receivers. The talker uses one set and the other set is attached to a phonograph record, which takes down every word that is said on the wire.

It is easy to see that the new invention can have many uses, bad as well as good. It can perform service in making criminals confess, as it will be possible to use it in much the way that the dictograph has been employed. It will be valuable for business men who desire to have records of their conversations over the wire. There are many cases of this nature in which it will come in handy.

The apparatus is so made that it takes down conversations of nearly any length without its operation being heard on the phone.

### Only One Run in Sixty-two Innings.

Bert Hall, of the Vancouver Champions, is entitled to a place among the notable performers of the Northwestern League in 1914.

Up to the close of the regular season he had pitched fifty-four consecutive innings with only one run scored against him. September 15th, pitching against Seattle, he added eight and one-third more innings to this number, making his record sixty-two and one-third consecutive innings with only one run.

This appears to be a record for the present Northwestern League, and there are no figures available to controvert it in the Pacific Northwest circuit, which ended in 1903.

Over in Idaho they have a little on them in this line of talk, as it will be recalled Walter Johnson, when he was with the Weiser club, pitched seventy-five consecutive innings without yielding a run.

### Veteran Fred Clarke to Leave Game.

When the National League pennant pace of 1915 got under way, a field leader who has seen more continuous service as a manager in its ranks than any other leader now in the game was among the missing. From official circles in Pittsburgh comes the news that Fred Clarke has served his last campaign at the head of the Buccaneers, and another man will be in charge before next season rolls around. His passing will leave John J. McGraw as the only remaining member of the noted pennant triumvirate—Clarke, Chance, and McGraw—which has accounted for every National League pennant since Ned Hanlon led his Brooklyn Superbas home in front in 1900.

Clarke has accounted for four National League pennants and two world's championships, and McGraw has gained five pennants and one world's title.

Clarke went to Pittsburgh at the beginning of the season of 1900, so he has been in active charge of the Pirates for fifteen successive seasons. He was included in the fourteen players who were transferred to the Smoky City from Louisville when Barney Dreyfuss, who had been at the head of the Louisville club, purchased an interest in the Pittsburgh club. Fourteen Colonels, as the Louisville players were known when that city was represented in the twelve-club National League circuit, were transferred to Pittsburgh for five Pirates and the sum of $25,000.

Other notables besides Clarke in this transfer were Hans Wagner, Claude Ritchie, Tommy Leach, Charles Phillippi, and Rube Waddell. Waddell remained there only two seasons, Ritchie until 1906, Phillippi until 1911, Leach until 1912, and Wagner is still there with Clarke.

Clarke's managerial career has been a noteworthy one. For fourteen successive years his team was a pennant contender, never finishing outside the first division. In 1904 he was fourth, and he reached the same position last season. In twelve campaigns he finished third or better. In the campaigns of 1901, 1902, and 1903, Clarke led his team to the National League championship, and in 1909 he repeated. In 1903 and 1909 the Pirates were world's champions, defeating Boston and Detroit respectively. In 1908 he fell one game short of the championship, tying the Giants for second place after the Cubs had won the memorable play-off game, which put the Giants one game out of first place. The Pirates finished second in 1900, the first year Clarke was in command, holding this same position in 1905, 1907, 1909, and 1912. They finished third in 1906, 1910, and 1911. The present season threatens to end the long run of first-division teams at Pittsburgh, though it is still possible that the Pittsburgh team may crowd into the first four.

As a player, Clarke's name will go down in history as one of the greatest in the game. In his prime he was a remarkable batsman, and he closed his active career on the diamond with a mark of .324 for 101 games in 1911, his eighteenth consecutive season in the major league. Getting away with a mark of .75 in 1894, when he joined the Louisville team in midseason, he followed with marks of .300 or better in ten of the twelve succeeding seasons, missing the select circle by a point in 1905 and getting .281 in 1900, his first season at Pittsburgh. Clarke is one of the players who can claim distinction as a .400 batsman, having reached the high mark of .406 in 1897. In two other campaigns he batted above .350. In his eighteen years of active service he finished in the charmed circle eleven times and never batted as low as .260.

Great as Clarke was with the willow, his batting never outshone his ability in the field. Up to the time of his retirement he was among the best outfielders in the game, rated solely from the standpoint of fielding. In the All Star National League teams named in "Spalding's Guide" for the five-year period between 1900-5 and 1905-10, Clarke got the call each time for left field. He was rated for his ability to "play the batsman," and he could cover ground and throw with the best of them.

The baseball career of the Pirate chieftain dates back to 1892, when he joined the Hastings, Neb., team at the age of nineteen. He finished that season with the St. Joseph, Mo., Independents, and the following spring he joined the St. Joseph team, of the Kansas State League. In midseason of 1893 he went to the Montgomery, Ala., team of the Southern League. For the first two months of the season of 1894 he was with the Savannah, Ga., team, and then he was purchased by Louisville, at that time in the National League. Since June, 1894, Clarke has been a prominent figure in the National League.

### Jail Subjects Tied to Trees.

When he had arrested so many drunken men that the jail could no longer hold them, Thomas Wilder, marshal of the town of Winslow, Ind., tied them to the trees in front of the jail until they became sober enough for trial. None escaped.

### Arrested for Trying to Keep Sullivan Law.

Stanislaus le Roy, an instructor in French at Teachers' College, Columbia University, was an indignant prisoner before Magistrate McQuade in the West Side Court recently, charged with having violated the Sullivan law by having a revolver in his home.

Mr. le Roy, who spent the summer in the Maine woods, returned to the city with his wife and children recently. Yesterday morning he was unpacking his trunks in his apartment, at No. 40 West Sixty-fifth Street, when he found a revolver and some cartridges, which he thought he had left in his Maine bungalow.

In the street the instructor found Patrolman Manning and asked how he could legally dispose of the revolver. The policeman arrested Mr. le Roy, and, in spite of his protests, took him to the West Sixty-eighth Street station, where he was locked up.

Magistrate McQuade, after hearing the teacher's explanation, discharged him, but said the policeman had done his duty in making the arrest.

At his home Mr. le Roy called his arrest an outrage.

"I wish," he said, "that some of the newspapers would point out editorially the absurdity and the injustice of the Sullivan law.

"Take my case, for example. Ten minutes before I spoke to the policeman, I did not even know the revolver was in my trunk. If I had not wished to act in a law-abiding manner, I certainly would not have spoken to him. This law is a protection to criminals, while it subjects respectable citizens to arrest."

### Champion Watermelon Eater.

Abner Short, of Mountain Dale, Ark., is the champion watermelon eater of the world, without a doubt. A few days ago, at a political rally, he offered to bet that he could eat two melons that together weighed seventy-five pounds. Two listeners told him to go ahead and they would pay for the melons, provided he ate them, but if he failed, he would have to pay for them and pay them $10, besides. Short agreed to these terms, and witnesses were summoned.

The first watermelon was devoured in fifteen minutes. Then came the second, somewhat larger than the first. Short cleaned this one out in twenty minutes. As he tossed the last strip of rind away, he looked the crowd over and remarked:

"Boys, I would like to have some watermelon; really, I am awfully fond of watermelon."

Another large one was brought, and some one in the party offered to wager $25 that Short would not be able to eat it, but he did, in less than twenty minutes.

### Bordeaux Capital in 1871.

Bordeaux, now the temporary capital of France, is 350 miles southwest of Paris, on the Orleans railway. It is a city of 240,000 inhabitants, on the west bank of the Garonne, sixty miles from the sea, in the center of the wine-growing district of Medoc. It is the fourth commercial port of France.

The city was the head of the Girondists in the revolution, and in the reign of terror suffered severely.

In 1871, the French government was transferred from Paris to Tours, 145 miles southwest of Paris, and, when the Prussians approached the latter city, was moved on to Bordeaux. The provisional government made Bordeaux its seat three months; then the city became the headquarters of the national assembly, which accepted the preliminaries of peace there.

The removal of the seat of the government of France to Bordeaux as a measure of precaution was adopted by the third republic soon after it was founded in September, 1870, on the ruins of the third empire. After the surrender at Sedan, the people of Paris rose against Napoleon III. A government of national defense was formed to carry on the campaign against the Prussians and to look after governmental affairs.

The meeting at which the dethronement of Napoleon II. was proclaimed was the last held by the assembly at Bordeaux.

### Laughs in War.

General French, commanding the British forces on the continent, gave this interesting side light on the soldier's way of looking at things, in a recent report:

"The German howitzer shells are from eight to nine inches in caliber, and on impact they send up columns of greasy black smoke. On account of this they are irreverently dubbed 'coal boxes,' 'black Marias,' or 'Jack Johnsons,' by the soldiers.

"Men who take things in this spirit are, it seems, likely to throw out the calculations based on loss of morale so carefully framed by the German military philosophers."

### New African Trip for Ida Simonton.

Miss Ida Vera Simonton, whose impressions of her first trip to the west coast of Africa were portrayed in a novel, entitled "Hell's Playground," is going back to the same region. She first went to Africa, according to report, to escape testifying in the first Thaw trial, but this time she is going in an advisory capacity on the schooner *Adeline Charleton,* which has been chartered by the new American Tropical Trading Company, to try to get the trade of the west coast for American merchants. Miss Simonton will take moving pictures and pick up further information about the west coast for use in literary or commercial enterprises.

Before her African trip Miss Simonton was a writer of advertisements in a Pittsburgh dry-goods store. She was a friend of Mrs. Nesbit, the mother of Mrs. Harry K.

Thaw, and, it was said, would have been subpœnaed by the prosecution to tell what she knew—according to rumor, a good deal—of the relations of Evelyn Nesbit with Harry Thaw and Stanford White. Soon after it was reported that she would be summoned as a witness, she was heard from in Paris, starting on a motor trip through France; and not long after that she was sailing for Africa, with the reported object of studying the language of the monkeys.

Miss Simonton plunged into the jungle and studied African life at firsthand, her only recreation being the reading of Darwin's "The Descent of Man" and "The Origin of Species." After her return, she published, in 1912, the book called "Hell's Playground." It is a picture of life on the West Coast, and Miss Simonton's impression was anything but favorable. She had much to say of the degeneration of the whites who had attempted to bring civilization into the country, and of the futility of their work among the negroes. Now, however, she is to return to the country in a less critical and perhaps more appreciative capacity.

The American Tropical Trading Company, with which she is connected, is an organization recently formed to take advantage of the fact that the imports from England, France, Germany, and Belgium, on which the West Coast depends for everything but its very existence, have been cut off by the war. For example, a consular report from Liberia says that that country is urgently in need of foodstuffs, particularly rice, grain, pickled pork, cornmeal, canned fruit, vegetables, fish, and sugar, as well as tobacco, gin, matches, and beer.

The company plans to enter into permanent trading relations with the natives, and on her first trip the schooner will carry a mixed cargo of consignments for use in barter and trade. The net proceeds of the return cargo, which will consist for the most part of ivory, coffee, palm oil, palm kernels, ebony, and teakwood, will be divided pro rata among the owners of the various consignments of outward-bound cargo, whether the particular shipment of any owner is disposed of or not. The company will cover marine insurance and war risk to the debit of the accounts of shippers.

### Tells of Aviator's Perils.

An aviator who has just returned to Paris from the front tells of the difficulties encountered by the flying men on reconnoissance duty. He said:

"We are forced to fly at a height of about one mile and a quarter, which makes observations difficult, as small objects, even with the aid of the strongest glasses, assume unfamiliar shapes and become foreshortened.

"If we fly under that height, we are greeted by a hail of rifle fire, which is far more effective than the cannon. We fear the rifles more than the bursting shrapnel, as the fire of the regiments, concentrated on a single object, is far more deadly."

### Yale's Deficit Smaller.

The annual report of George Parmly Day, treasurer of Yale University, issued recently, shows total gifts and bequests for the year ended June 30, of $1,019,846.73, as compared with $1,416,935.84 for the previous year. The net increase in funds is $650,245.74, as against $1,054,868.58 for last year.

Considered as a teaching organization, the university closed the year with a deficit of $7,786.46, the amount being considerably smaller than the deficit of a year ago. Loss of interest through default and reduction of dividends amounted to over $27,000, this being, however, less than four per cent of the total income from all investments.

Because of the losses of income, the average yield on total investments is reduced to 4.83 per cent, as compared with 5.01 per cent a year ago. The total investments amount to $14,624,258.58.

### Try This "Traveling by Ear."

Some one who rides over the same trolley line or railroad route every day has invented a game about it. He shuts his eyes and travels by ear, as he calls it. He listens closely to the sounds made by the train in passing a cut, running over an embankment, passing a siding or a high wall, entering a tunnel, crossing a trestle, et cetera, et cetera.

He has learned the route so well by ear that he can tell within a few yards where he is at any moment. The train runs tugging up grade and changes its song distinctly when the down grade is reached. He knows when it swings under the bridge just before his station, and is ready to leave the train exactly to the second.

### Robbed by Old Swindle.

Charged with obtaining $8,500 from R. Paxton Wilson, of Richmond, Va., by a swindle, Lawrence H. Day was arrested at his home on Haddon Heights, N. J., and was sent to the county jail in default of $10,000 bail fixed by Justice Hyatt. The police of Camden and New York are searching for a man named King, who is said to have been Day's accomplice.

Day, according to Wilson, called on him in Richmond and posed as a man of means. He said, it is charged, that he had a plan to "beat" a Niagara Falls gambling house. King, it is said, agreed to put up $3,500, and Wilson was asked to put up a like amount. The three went to Niagara Falls, according to Wilson, and put up the money, but the plan did not work right, and Wilson returned to Richmond without his $3,500. Then, he alleges, he obtained $5,000 on some real estate and lost that, likewise. Day, with his wife and four children, had lived in Camden, N. J., for two years.

### Old Bachelor's Odd Epitaph.

"To an independent, good-looking old bachelor, who, in his younger days, preferred to live a single life rather than get married and be ruled by a petticoat boss through this life and perhaps in eternity."

A granite monument bearing this unique epitaph and surmounted by the rather heroic effigy of a bachelor standing on one side of the River Jordan, with three old maids on the other, beckoning him to cross, now marks the grave of F. B. Waite, an eccentric resident of Myrtle Point, Ore., who died recently at an advanced age after a life of single blessedness.

In his will Waite left explicit directions concerning the monument and inscription it should bear.

### Travels of a Lost Gold Ring.

Fearing he would damage his valuable gold ring while loading a car, a Chicago employee of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul road hung it on a nail and forgot all about it until after the car was sealed and had departed. He wired to San Francisco, the destination of the car, and the coast tracers were put to work. The travels were interrupted when Assistant Agent Driscoll, of the Southern Pacific Company, found it hanging on a nail inside of the freight car when opened in San Francisco. The ring was carefully inclosed in a neat package and again placed in a Chicago-bound sealed car, and arrived here one day this week and was delivered to its owner.

### Snakes Fight to the Death.

A crowd at Faquay, N. C., witnessed a snake make a fight the other day. A king snake and a moccasin were discovered in deadly combat near a spring.

The king snake had the moccasin's head in its mouth when discovered, and the moccasin had its tail tightly twisted around a root on the water's edge, the king snake being unable to loosen the hold so it could finish the job.

Onlookers broke the moccasin's hold from the root, and the two snakes were carried to a clear opening near by, where the king snake made away with the moccasin by twisting around its rival and squeezing its life out. Then the king snake swallowed the moccasin and crawled leisurely back to the spring.

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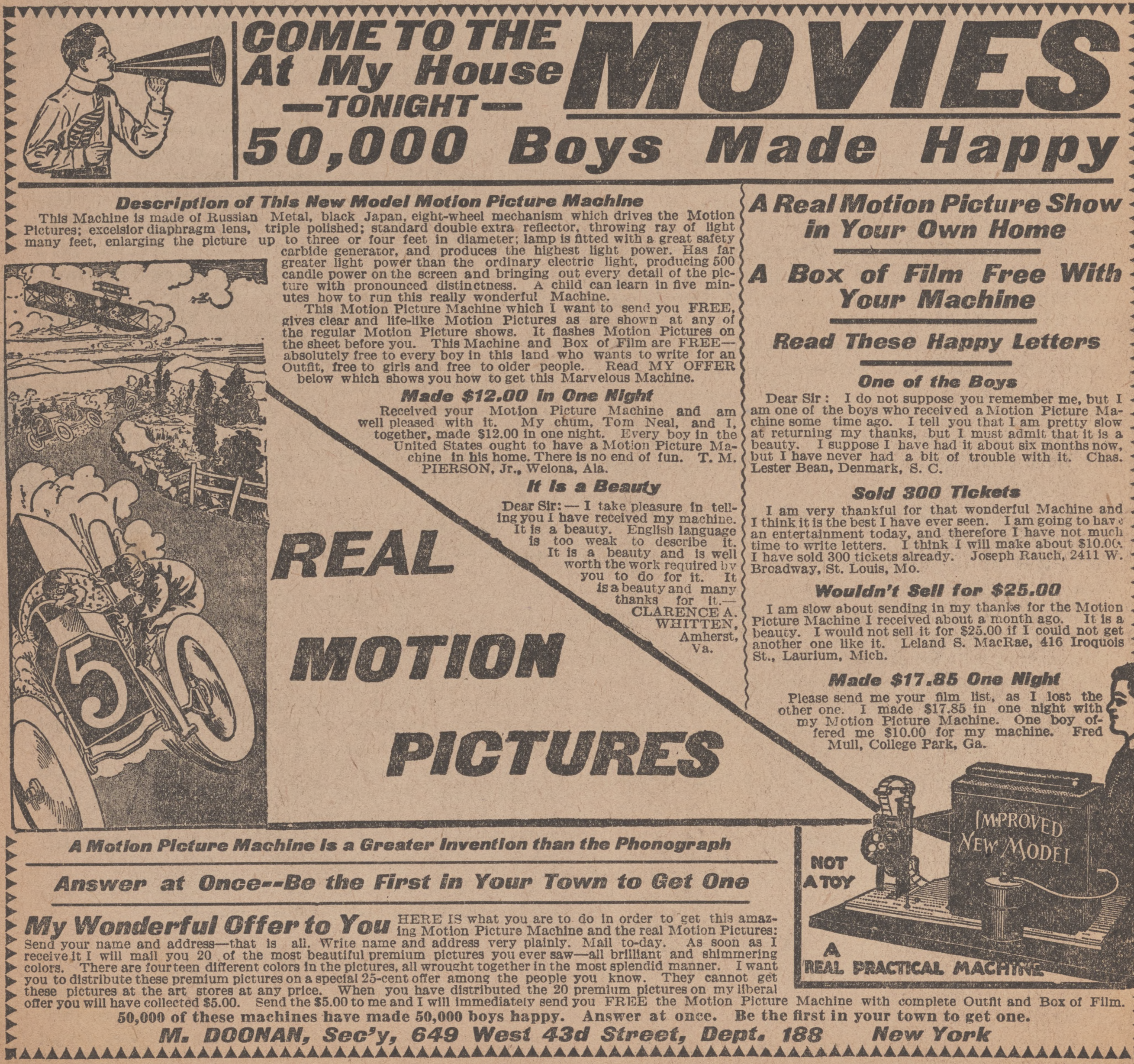

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This Motion Picture Machine which I want to send you FREE, gives clear and life-like Motion Pictures as are shown at any of the regular Motion Picture shows. It flashes Motion Pictures on the sheet before you. This Machine and Box of Film are FREE—absolutely free to every boy in this land who wants to write for an Outfit, free to girls and free to older people. Read MY OFFER below which shows you how to get this Marvelous Machine.

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Received your Motion Picture Machine and am well pleased with it. My chum, Tom Neal, and I, together, made $12.00 in one night. Every boy in the United States ought to have a Motion Picture Machine in his home. There is no end of fun. T. M. PIERSON, Jr., Welona, Ala.

**It Is a Beauty**

Dear Sir:—I take pleasure in telling you I have received my machine. It is a beauty. English language is too weak to describe it. It is a beauty and is well worth the work required by you to do for it. It is a beauty and many thanks for it.—CLARENCE A. WHITTEN, Amherst, Va.

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Dear Sir: I do not suppose you remember me, but I am one of the boys who received a Motion Picture Machine some time ago. I tell you that I am pretty slow at returning my thanks, but I must admit that it is a beauty. I suppose I have had it about six months now, but I have never had a bit of trouble with it. Chas. Lester Bean, Denmark, S. C.

**Sold 300 Tickets**

I am very thankful for that wonderful Machine and I think it is the best I have ever seen. I am going to have an entertainment today, and therefore I have not much time to write letters. I think I will make about $10.00. I have sold 300 tickets already. Joseph Rauch, 2411 W. Broadway, St. Louis, Mo.

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I am slow about sending in my thanks for the Motion Picture Machine I received about a month ago. It is a beauty. I would not sell it for $25.00 if I could not get another one like it. Leland S. MacRae, 416 Iroquois St., Laurium, Mich.

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Please send me your film list, as I lost the other one. I made $17.85 in one night with my Motion Picture Machine. One boy offered me $10.00 for my machine. Fred Mull, College Park, Ga.

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